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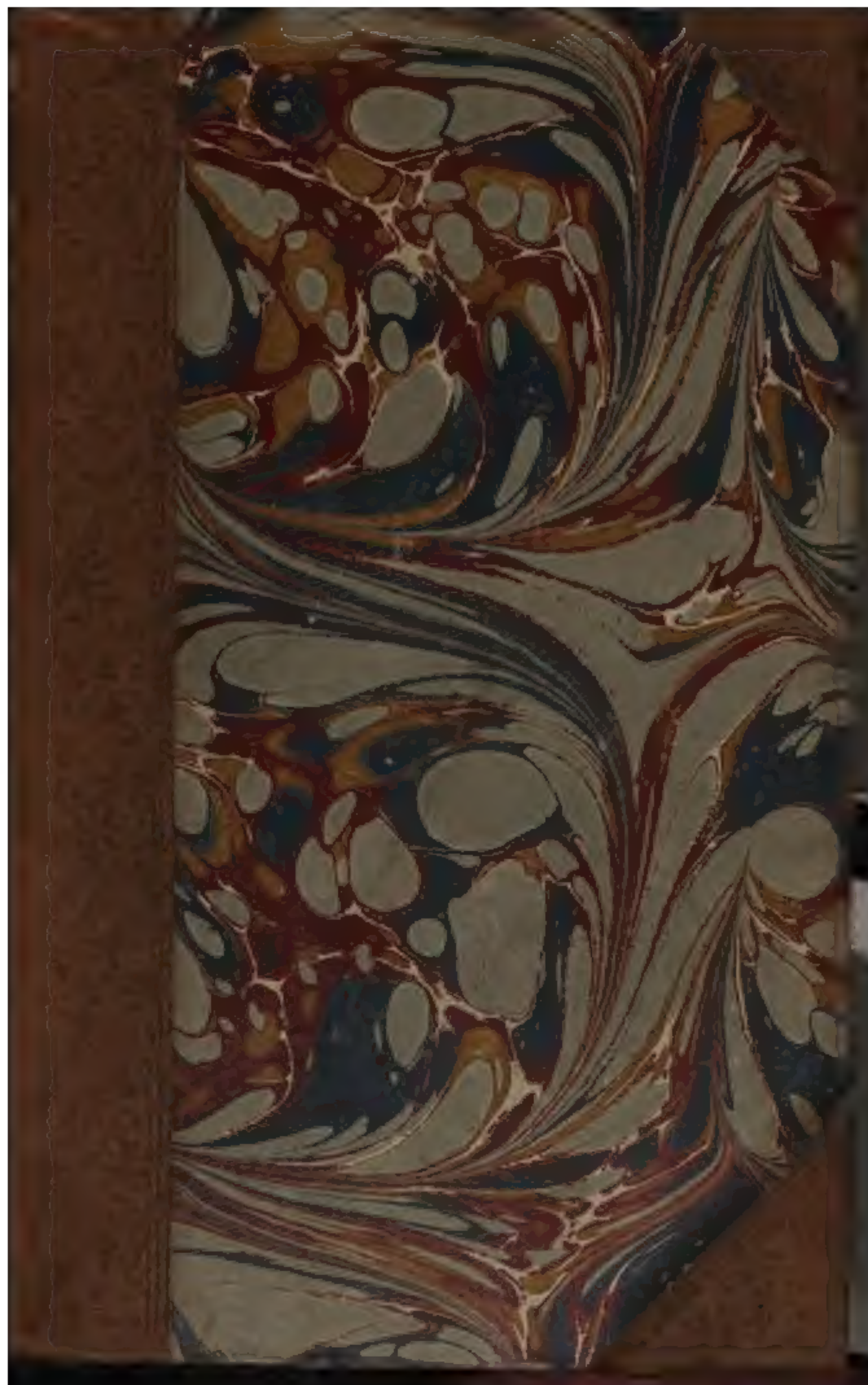
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SOME ACCOUNT

OF

MYSELF.

SOME
ACCOUNT OF MYSELF.

BY
CHARLES EARL OF ERPINGHAM,
&c. &c. &c.

IN
Four Volumes.

“ It is my intention to represent Characters such as they are in life . but Heaven forbid that I should pourtray any person in particular.”— **LE SAGE.**

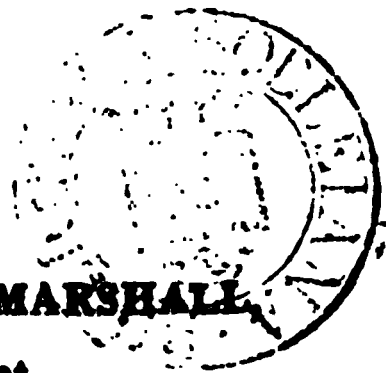
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SOME ACCOUNT

OF

MYSELF.

CHAP. I.

LITERATURE.

ALTHOUGH with the aid of the bottle I contrived to fill up eight hours out of the four and twenty, there was a considerable portion of time in each day, which it was not in the nature of things that drinking and sleeping should consume. I never arrived at that species of beastiality to be found in some of the lower and middle orders of life, in which life is passed in the con-

stant succession of losing the senses and recovering them.

My mornings were wholly unemployed. Gaming I abhorred—of women I was weary, and of walking or riding as a pleasure I was sickened. I remember a sprig of fashion who feeling ashamed with having the inside of his head better furnished than any of his companions, such as knowing that Great Britain was an island, that Julius Cæsar lived before Louis the Fourteenth, as well as some other geographical and historical information of the same nature, assigned as a reason for his acquirements, that he had unhappily been some time resident with a relation in a distant part of the country, where no newspapers could be procured, and that for want of a better employment, while his hair was dressing, he had been driven to studies which were beneath the notice of a man of taste. I also remember to have

heard the son and heir of Sir George Buckett, who was looking forward to some high employment in the state, say that he constantly studied the affairs of the nation while he was cleaning his teeth.

I certainly had not the motives of the former, nor the prospects of the latter, but I nevertheless occasionally felt satisfied with my literary pursuits. A thirst of knowledge was I imagine originally engendered in me by my intercourse with Major General Blarney, who was allowed by competent judges to be one of the best cooks in England. The General supplied me with mental and bodily food, for being at the same hotel, and as I was almost as great a devotee as himself to the pleasures of the table, congeniality of sentiment soon led to an intimacy.

The General had been upon actual service, and had been taken prisoner under circumstances which I

have forgotten, but I suppose the cause of his surrendering was nothing very remarkable, as he omitted to state it in the account of his transactions with the enemy, which he published for the gratification of his countrymen, on his return from captivity. His statement was almost entirely confined to a detail of the wretched cookery he met with on his travels, and of the improvements he effected to the evident astonishment of the natives, who regarded him as something more than human, particularly when he was discovered to be as great an adept in the veterinary as in the culinary art. A horse shod by him was instantly doubled in value. His reputation with his Majesty of ~~———~~, who was both a glutton and a hunter, had at one time arrived at such a pitch, that he was considered a dangerous rival to the prime minister, who caballed against

him and procured his removal from court.

The general suffered immensely in his journey home from actual starvation, being hurried on from stage to stage with such rapidity, until he passed the frontiers, that he had not an opportunity of procuring a decent meal; and, as he stated, to eat what was provided for him was impossible. I felt interested in the accounts he gave me of his sufferings, and actually read his book from beginning to end.

In a short time I became as much enamoured of the general's cookery and conversation, as His Majesty of ———, and sincerely lamented that I had neglected my studies. But I still thought that the acquisition of knowledge would not be less valuable for coming at a rather late period of life. I therefore determined to make up for my lost time, and resolved not only to study during the dressing of my hair,

and the cleaning of my teeth, but also while I was eating my breakfast. By this means I hoped my stock of information would soon surpass that of Mr. Buckett.

The consequences of sipping at the fountain of knowledge, who can foresee? Reading books soon led me to admire authors ; and it was with the greatest pleasure that I availed myself of the general's offer, to introduce me to the literary circle, which consumed part of the forenoon in the shop of Mr. Ackett, the bookseller.

I was delighted at thus mingling with men of literary talent, who courted science for herself alone, and whose patriotism induced them to edify their country, without the prospect of sordid gain. I saw myself surrounded with men independent in purse and principle, and was frequently treated with the perusal of works in manuscript, and constantly with the reading

them before they were publicly ushered into the world. The praise which invariably followed any publication emanating from an individual among the chosen few, filled me with the highest admiration; and I considered myself honoured beyond expression in their accepting my frequent invitations to dinner.

I hardly know to what a depth this literary mania would have plunged me, had I not been roused from it by some trivial circumstances, which considerably derobed my new associates of their merits. But while the fervor lasted, I passed many hours together in my own apartment, dozing away the time in silent stupidity, which I then thought was *thinking*.

My mind was twisted and turned in every direction, to fix upon some subject on which I could exercise my talents; but the result of my study only served to convince me, that my

brain was formed to receive, and not to convey impressions. How it is that I am scribbling, at the present moment, I know not; but, perhaps there is a considerable difference in travelling in the regions of truth, and wandering in the wilds of fiction—in describing the faculties of the mind, and in recording the actions of the body.

My researches, however, enabled me to develope some of the secret springs of authorship; and I was satisfied that three-fourths of the difficulties vanished when a person had anything to write about. The great art lay, I was satisfied, in making a book out of nothing; and in this art, I will do my new friends the justice to say, that most of them excelled in an eminent degree. I read all their works with the greatest care. At this distance of time I have forgotten their titles; but, even after a steady perusal, I do not think that I acquired a

single idea, or in any way added to the stock of information I already possessed.

I was strenuously advised to illuminate the world with some of my lucubrations, which, as they would spring from a noble pen, would be relished by the public with a double zest. I was even invited to consider a work as my own, and to publish, with my name as the author standing in the title-page, a book that I had no inclination to read, upon a subject with which I was wholly unacquainted. These, however, were trifling objections, and easily amended. The book, I remember, was actually printed, and complete in every thing but its first leaf. I was offered the honour of it in fee simple for the very moderate sum of fifty guineas.

Now although this was purchasing literary fame at a cheap rate, I was such a novice in scientific pursuits, as to decline this opportunity of having

my name handed down to posterity, in the catalogue of noble authors, upon the plea of deception. But my chagrin was great, when only three days after, I joined the circle in congratulating Sir Thomas Bubble, on his last new publication; at the same time blaming him for keeping the progress of his labours a secret from his friends.

When the party was a little dispersed, I enquired for the book in question, in order at least to know what it was called, in case I should have occasion to mention it again to Sir Thomas, when, to my astonishment, I found it to be the individual work which had so lately been offered to myself. As I left the bookseller's shop, I stumbled upon the real writer, whom I upbraided with his venality. His defence to the charge was such as completely to exculpate him from blame. He said, that he was an unfortunate author by profession, and that he

had seriously offended the booksellers, by publishing a book upon his own account. The consequence was, that they refused to purchase any more of his productions. Since that time, however, he had done pretty well in disposing of his works to would-be authors, who were ready to pay him more liberally than his former patrons. The work he had offered to me, was, in the first instance, engaged to Lord Bagsworth, but his Lordship having had a run of ill luck, he was unable to make good his payment in any other way than by promises ; which, as it was a species of security his Lordship was in the known habit of issuing, without troubling his head much about honouring when due, the author wisely declined. It was then offered to myself, and, on my refusal, became the property of Sir Thomas Bubble, who had been one of the author's best customers.

By the help of a Bank note, and a declaration of secrecy, I discovered that not one of my literary friends were the actual writers of the works which bore their name, but that they were all manufactured in the same way.

This was one of the trivial circumstances to which I have alluded. The film was completely removed from my eyes, and I viewed those I had so lately admired, with the most sovereign contempt. Had anything more been wanting to have enabled me to fix a proper estimation upon the abilities of these dealers in brains, I might easily have procured it, by mingling with characters of *real* literary eminence, and hearing the ridicule which was justly heaped upon these drones in the hive of learning. The praise which they lavished upon each other, was all they ever received.

CHAP. II.**AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.**

SICKENED with the quackery of science, and with its empty-headed *professors*, I withdrew myself entirely from the region of letters, leaving the pains and pleasures of authorship to such as chose to enjoy them, either as originals, or as dealers in second-hand commodities.

During the interval which elapsed, between the time of my getting rid of my old employment, and entering upon a new one, I almost sunk into a state of apathy, from which I was roused

by all the evils I had formerly endured being forced upon my recollection, by the unexpected appearance of the last person in the world whom I was desirous of seeing.

I frequently sat for hours at the window of the coffee-room, which fronted the public street, deriving, or rather endeavouring to derive, amusement from the passing scene. A succession of new objects occupied my mind, as far as it was capable of being occupied with any thing; and a constant change saved me from the exertion of finding food for the mind by the operation of thinking. By repeated observations, I had led myself to expect the appearance of remarkable individuals at stated times, and was disappointed if the hour and the person did not arrive together. The only object about me which I valued was my watch, which performed its motions with remarkable correctness, and told

me, to the moment, when it was proper for me to engage in the active avocations of eating and drinking, or in the passive callings of sleeping and doing nothing.

My eyes, for want of other objects, frequently rested upon a man whom I observed, for several days following, lurking about the door of the hotel. There was nothing particularly attractive in his appearance, except perhaps to a real lover of the picturesque, who had habituated himself to confound beauty and deformity, not together, but to mistake each for the other. He bore the marks of the most squalid poverty. His cheeks were hollowed from the effects of starvation ; and although there was every thing about him which indicated that he had once seen happier days, and been in possession of athletic limbs, nothing now remained but an emaciated skeleton, held together by muscles, which did

not seem capable of uniting the bones for the due performance of the functions of life.

The looks from a pair of haggard eyes were frequently directed towards myself. Without actually begging, he accepted alms of all those who either from motives of charity, ostentation, or to free themselves from solicitation, are willing to relieve the objects which are presented before them under the guise of poverty and distress. As to myself, I can safely say that my charity was never abused, for it was a virtue I never practised. I always considered that indiscriminate donations only tended to sanction idleness, and increase mendicity. In order, therefore, to avoid encouraging the unproductive classes, or, if the reader pleases, to indulge a selfish disposition, I never put myself in the way of experiencing those delightful sensations, which, I have been given to un-

derstand, are the invariable attendants upon a benevolent action. It was quite sufficient for me to reason upon the abstract principle. Perhaps as I had never suffered from actual want, I might have judged of the rest of mankind by myself, and have concluded that as the blessings of life are fleeting, the curses are imaginary.

Contrary to my usual custom, I one day dined in the coffee room, and took my station at one of the windows fronting the street. For the first time, I had a full view of the beggar's face without his being conscious that my eyes were directed towards him.

In the poverty struck visage of the miserable wretch before me, I recognized the once fascinating countenance of Villiers. I felt my blood freezing within in me. An inward shuddering seized every nerve. His conduct rushed upon my mind in the most glowing colours. My head turned giddy, and

it was some time before I recovered my perfect recollection. Various passions seized upon me by turns, and I verily believe that in the space of a few minutes, I went through the whole gamut, playing a fugue upon every key, and gradually advancing from the bass to the treble. The rascality of the object before me, and my own folly, stared me full in the face. My mind was occupied by turns with the thirst for revenge, and the dread of exposure. Revenge at last predominated, and in revenge I determined to indulge to satiety. By exposure I could not forfeit any one's esteem, for there was no person whose regard I possessed, or whose regard I was desirous of obtaining.

The scoundrel who had abused my confidence was at last within my grasp. I deliberated within myself as to the most effectual mode of administering a punishment, which should be

adequate to his crimes. But preparatory to my deciding upon the best mode of proceeding, I thought it would be proper to hear what account the wretch could give of himself, and of his conduct. I was satisfied by his hanging about the hotel, that he had stationed himself there for the purpose of attracting my notice; I therefore gave directions that he might be shown into my sitting room, whither I immediately followed him.

I seated myself and looked towards him, as if I expected him to explain the reason of his present appearance.

“ You are surprized to see me,” said he, “ and perhaps, still more surprized to see me in my present state.”

I continued silent.

“ Your looks, my Lord, ask me for explanation. My rags will speak eloquently for themselves, and for me. A recital of the steps, by which I have gradually sunk to this pitch of misery,

will neither amuse nor instruct you. It would be giving unnecessary pain to both, without proving of the least benefit to either."

"Why do you seek me? With what confidence can you appear in my presence? Do you not dread the consequences?"

"No! Every change must be for the better. You may, indeed, expose a beggar, at the expence of publishing to the world your *own* folly, and if you are not by this time aware that folly is the legal prey of knavery, you have lived to little purpose. Beyond such an exposure, it is out of your power to injure me. I only took from you what would have been the property of some one else."

"Your gains were enormous!"

"So they ought to have been. What else could have induced me, to have made myself subservient to a man of your disposition. It is now some

years since we parted. If you have found a companion since our separation, who has either respected, or regarded you for any thing but your wealth, it is to me you owe the obligation. If you have reflected at all, it is to me you are indebted, and if your temper is sufficiently curbed to enable you to mingle with mankind on terms of equality, it is my conduct that has been the means of teaching you.

“What has become of the immense sums of which you have defrauded me?”

“Wasted! There was a fatality attached to whatever you possessed. Once yours, it acquired a habit of mouldering away. It may surprize you, but I was only a novice in the art of cozenage. An experienced professor with so good a subject as yourself, would have made an attention upon you answer his purpose, but I still question, if even with a veteran in the

science, what had once belonged to you, would have rested quietly.

“ How came you here ?”

“ By charity !”

“ What do you expect from me ?”

“ Charity ?”

“ By what claim ?”

“ Your gratitude ! If you have not profited by the lessons which I gave you, it is no fault of mine.”

“ Go on —.”

“ Have you never been the dupe of any one since we parted ?”

“ Do you really expect an answer ?”

“ I am perfectly indifferent about one. I can answer for you. You have never ceased to be the dupe either of your own folly or of the designs of others. I endeavoured to give you an insight into mankind, but I fear I have been unsuccessful. The tree will always be known by its fruits : the nectarine will never blossom upon the

thorn. You have been happy since our meeting?"

"You ask the question as if an answer were unnecessary, and appear to well know, that I have been miserable."

"You are mistaken. You give me credit for a greater stock of information than I really possess. I do *not* know from what has actually passed, that you have been miserable. It is sufficient that I am intimately acquainted with your temper and disposition, and *with* them I am too well aware that happiness, or even comparative comfort is out of your reach. The recollection of your follies act upon your mind, as rust upon iron. But in misery we can sympathize; you in the midst of plenty—I in the midst of want. Your prospects?"

"—— Are hopeless."

"Here is another proof of the sym-

pathy, which first led us together. Here too we are upon an equality."

"With what face dare ——."

"Hold! I am here by your invitation. You cannot accuse me of having intruded upon you. Good breeding, therefore, is at least due to your guest. It is true, I wished to engage your notice, for I sought after you to satisfy the wants of us both. Since we parted my experience in the world has increased tenfold. I have imbibed knowledge in the school of adversity, and am ready to exchange advice for bread. If you wish at last to know yourself, you ought not to hesitate an instant. Besides, as I have already said, I am entitled to your gratitude. I preserved to you the patrimony of my ancestors."

This was too much; the patrimony he had preserved was no longer mine. The expences of Lady Erpingham's establishment absorbed the whole.

However, I might previously have been disposed to forgiveness, this drove all favourable impressions from my mind. I well knew that if I had *luckily lost* my patrimony, I never should have *found* an inclination in Lord Vava-cour's co-heiress to have met me at the altar. In balancing accounts in the scale of happiness, I would willingly have given up the Erpingham property, if I could have freed myself from the shackles of my wife.

I rang the bell, and beckoned Villiers to leave the room.

"You refuse me?"

I made no reply—

'You are ready to brave all consequences?"

"Wretch! leave me, and be careful we do not meet again. But that I am satisfied I cannot add to thy misery, thou shouldest pay the forfeit of thy crimes."

A ghastly smile came across his countenance. He was advancing towards me, but the entrance of the waiter arrested his progress, and caused him to retreat.

CHAP. III.

CRIM. CON.

TO a superficial observer of nature, the remarks I made at the close of the last chapter respecting Lady Erpingham, may appear somewhat at variance with common sense, and with the usage of the world. There are many, I am well aware, who estimate the supposed happiness of others by the apparent portion of misery with which they are visited. Thus, although, a termagant wife will be allowed to constitute a positive evil, a sulky cold blooded helpmate, who has neither feelings nor

affections, and who either is, or affects to be, indifferent to the conduct of a husband, is looked upon as a negative good.

Notwithstanding my actions may have belied me, I am satisfied that I possessed a heart formed for the cultivation of social enjoyments. If I was incapable, from the blight which destroyed my well founded hopes of comfort, of experiencing that ardency of attachment which can be felt but once, I was at least capable of viewing with esteem, respect, and regard, a female who would have shared my pleasures, and have taken an interest in my pains. My ideas were naturally of the domestic order, but a domestic life had always been denied me. I never saw a wife hanging upon the arm of a husband, with a face which indicated content, but I envied the felicity which I was doomed never to enjoy; and my blood boiled within me, when I met

with those whom love had united, and to whom friendship, founded upon reciprocal attachment, had strewed the thorny path of life with flowers that fade not, and with fruits that preserve their flavour till the scene is closed.

Almost from the day which fixed the indissoluble bonds between Lady Erpingham and myself, the few amusements I indulged in, I procured without the pale of my household. Uneasiness had fixed herself on my brow in characters too marked to be mistaken, but I will do the justice to some of my female acquaintance, in saying that endeavours were not wanting to dissipate the gloom which surrounded me.

I had not been long married before I was considered as a "loose fish." This term, I understood to mean a person *loose* in every point but the most essential. The nuptial tie, however, I found to be no bar to the indulgence of inclination. It only caused a differ-

ence in the objects, and the married were substituted for the single.

Of all the females with whom I associated none had appeared to take a greater interest in my unhappy condition than Lady Isabella Ainsworth. Being daughter to the Duke of Tiverton, her rank assured her welcome to Lady Erpingham. Lady Isabella was one of the guests invited by the Countess, during the honey moon. She was, as times go, a handsome woman, but with a face more remarkable for expression than for regular beauty. However, her attentions were of the more dangerous kind, for she was enabled to obtain that influence by the operations of time and opportunity, which she failed to command upon first impressions.

Lady Isabella professed herself to be unhappy in her own marriage, in having a husband who was better suited in point of feelings and disposition to Lady Erpingham, than to

herself. There was a co-incidence in our situation, which ripened acquaintance into intimacy, and a similarity in our fate, which mellowed that intimacy into pity for our mutual sufferings.

Pity, every one knows, is nearly allied, probably first cousin, to love. At all events, I can assert from experience, that there are certain sensations which have the same degree of relationship to both.—But I am entering into a disquisition upon the passions, instead of telling a simple, and perhaps a foolish tale.

The soul of Mr. Ainsworth was devoted to his hounds, and his bottle, and as the seasons varied, the one or the other was predominant. Although the daughter of a duke, Lady Isabella's portion had been none of the largest, and Mr. Ainsworth's chief attraction was a fortune supposed to be clear, but which was in fact loaded with incumbrances, which the expences of himself and

wife were continually increasing. They supported an establishment both in town and country, for their mutual convenience, but like two buckets in a well, Lady Isabella chose to reside in London during the sporting season, while Mr. Ainsworth usually made the town house his abode during the summer.

With other idlers I frequented the house of Lady Isabella, for the amusement it afforded. I felt a pleasure in her society, but it was not until I became disgusted with literary pursuits, that I found my inclinations fettered in the slightest degree. When my attention was weaned from authors and books, the blank which was left required to be filled up. I sought the assistance of Lady Isabella to drive away the *ennui*, which seized me, and obtained it. Fame, I knew, had sounded forth the praises of her ladyship upon several occasions of a similar

nature. But that to me was an additional recommendation, aware, probably, that by practice alone perfection is attained.

At the period when Villiers made his appearance at the hotel, my evenings were usually passed in the company of Lady Isabella. Her fascinations were effective, and I was not a little proud at having supplanted several pretenders to her ladyship's favour. Although the world had made free with her ladyship's reputation, the accusations against her had never assumed a tangible shape; she was, therefore, visited, and received by the tribe of fashionables, who submit to be led by custom, instead of being guided by conviction. The person who is countenanced by *every body* must in the eyes of the world be immaculate, and as Lady Isabella had not openly infringed upon the code of propriety, the censors of fashionable life had not de-

cided upon her having passed the bounds of decorum. Still, however, she was more tolerated than courted. She had afforded ample scope for scandal to work upon, and the same person that accosted her with a smile, frequently left her with a sneer, when that sneer was not likely to be perceptible to the party concerned.

But Lady Isabella knew the world. She placed a proper estimation upon its good opinion, and attached sufficient importance to its censure. In other words, she despised both. I was inclined to agree with her, for I had too often seen vice triumphant, and virtue degraded, to place any great value upon reputation in the light in which it is usually considered.

An intercourse which had exceeded the prescribed bounds was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Ainsworth, who felt himself compelled to add to the incumbrances which already burthened

his estates. Cash, at that time, not being easy to be procured, his attentions were directed to other means of raising a supply. Among other modes, he directed his views to myself. On a sudden his comforts had been broken in upon, and his domestic peace destroyed. Paragraphs swarmed in the news-papers, and Lady Isabella's character was for ever blasted. An action was commenced against me for criminal conversation, in which, the damages were rated at only fifty thousand pounds, and I was involved in a labyrinth of perplexity, from which I saw no possibility, of extricating myself without a heavy fine upon my imprudence.

Lady Isabella naturally threw herself upon my protection, without doubt expecting me to attend to her future provision. All this was very reasonable. Her claims upon me were unanswerable ; for my sake she had been

deserted by the world, and on my account she had yielded up, all that is dear, or *ought* to be dear to woman. I cannot say that I was exactly pleased with my bargain, for to confess the truth, I was a little weary of the partial connection; a permanent one, therefore, held out no very pleasing prospect. But it would have been ungenerous and unmanly to have uttered a complaint.

I provided apartments for the lady, and did my best to recompense her, for what she had sacrificed. My next step was to defend the action, as far as a defence could be made consistent with *honourable* conduct towards her ladyship. It would have been highly improper to have urged the lady's former levity. Nothing was left for me to plead, but the husband's carelessness, and upon this point I prepared to dilate as much as possible.

Fortune, however, was more kind to me than I deserved. I was informed

of a previous affair, in which Mr. Ainsworth had compromised the damages, and retaken his wife to his bosom. In my case, he was really anxious to get rid of her, and in the ruined state of her husband's finances, Lady Isabella was no less anxious for a wealthy protector.

Having no ambition to employ an agent in marring my cause, I undertook the preliminary management of it myself. My first step was to lay before the husband the evidence I should have to adduce on the trial, which was certainly not of a nature to redound to his honour. It had the desired effect, and produced a compromise, in which I engaged to suffer judgment to go by default, in order to the facilitating a divorce, and to pay the sum of two thousand pounds, in lieu of any damages which might be assessed upon me.

It may seem strange that with so

good a defence I should have agreed to such a settlement of the business. But I had reasons, which in my estimation were sufficiently weighty to influence my decision. In the first place, my evidence was not so perfect as I could have wished it to be. Secondly, I was terrified at the glorious uncertainty of the law. Thirdly, the trouble in which I should have been involved, appalled me. Fourthly and lastly, though not least in my estimation, I was gratified at the éclat which the business would bring upon me, particularly as I could obtain it on such easy terms.

I could readily figure to myself the situation and feelings of my father and mother. A departure from the laws of chastity, on the part of a female, affords strong presumptive proofs of a weakness of understanding, and of a total want of foresight. The woman who has yielded, will always be an ob-

ject of contempt, even to the man to whom she has sacrificed what should be more prized than existence. In my opinion, no treatment on the part of a husband can justify the offence ; however cruelty may, in some instances, palliate it. There is, or *ought* to be, a delicacy about the female mind, from which no female can depart, unless she has wilfully submitted to the absolute dominion of vice or folly.

Lady Isabella did not long remain a clog upon my hands. She discovered, by some means or other, the arrangement which had been made between Mr. Ainsworth and myself, and played off the same artillery against her husband as had been successful in my case. An investigation into the real facts would, of course, have been fatal to Mr. Ainsworth's projects. But Lady Isabella was not nice ; she entered into a compromise with her husband, by which, for an annuity, she consented

to throw no obstacles in the way of a divorce.

Before the proceedings which were to reduce Lady Isabella to the use of her maiden name were brought to a conclusion, but after her annuity was firmly settled, the apartments which her ladyship occupied became untenanted. We had never openly resided together, as being married myself, I was not lost to all sense of decency; but my visits were daily. A note was left for me, simply apologizing for having given me so much trouble, and stating, that she had released me from all further cares on her account, by placing herself under the protection of Major O'Brien, who, she said, had prior claims upon her affections.

I neither envied the Major, nor regretted the loss of the lady. I have since heard that they continue together upon amicable terms, solely by her spirit of perseverance, which has en-

abled her to refuse either to marry the Major, or to give up any part of her annuity. Lady Isabella followed her own inclinations in every thing. The Major was her rallying point, to which she constantly returned from her frequent aberrations. But the Major was a philosopher ; jealousy was therefore beneath him, and as Lady Isabella permitted him to share her purse, he was indifferent about sharing any thing else.

Of all the scrapes in which I had involved myself, this had given me the slightest portion of vexation. I had, it is true, been Lady Isabella's dupe, but the consequences had been so trivial, when compared with some former occurrences, that I considered myself rather fortunate than otherwise. I will own myself to have been deceived respecting Lady Isabella, by her having been among the chosen number of

those invited by Lady Erpingham. But to Lady Erpingham rank was every thing, and character nothing. All her ideas were drawn from the peerage book ; and if a person could produce a pedigree, whether it graced the brows of a highwayman or a street-walker, her ladyship would have been as well satisfied as if it adorned the man of worth, or the woman of honour.

Many wives would have been angry at the event which I have just mentioned, even although they had lived in a state of half-separation. But Lady Erpingham had no idea unconnected with state and grandeur. I never heard that she made the slightest allusion, either to my own conduct, or to that of Lady Isabella. We met occasionally during the time the *faux pas* formed the chief topic of conversation, but there was not the least difference in her be-

haviour. I made the most formal bow, when I enquired into her ladyship's health, and received in return the usual stately curtesy, when she assured me that she was well.

CHAP. IV.

PROMISES.

AS Villiers will have again to make his appearance upon the scene of action, it may not be amiss to keep him in mind. I felt myself considerably disturbed at seeing him so unexpectedly, although I despised his threats. Probably, if I had racked my brains for a century in endeavouring to devise the most severe punishment which it was in my power to have inflicted, I could not have fixed upon any one more painful than the torture he must

necessarily have felt in his degraded state.

All attempts to recover my lost property would have been unavailing ; and, as he observed, an exposure of the circumstances which had passed between us would only hold forth a knave and a fool to public view. In my conscience, I verily believe that many a rascal escapes the fangs of justice from the same motives on the part of a prosecutor. But I had a more powerful reason ; I must have confessed myself to have been in the wrong, which I never could have submitted to.

I left Villiers, therefore, to his fate, but not without some little exultation at seeing the wretch who had abused my confidence to a degree unparalleled, as far as my own experience will enable me to judge, reduced to beg for charity from the person he had so greatly deceived ; and I exulted still further (more perhaps to my shame as a man,)

that I denied the morsel which was required at my hands.

As my connection with Lady Isabella Ainsworth was brought to a crisis soon after my rencontre with Villiers, my attention was directed to a new object, sufficiently powerful to obliterate all traces of an event, which would otherwise have made a greater impression upon my mind. As he did not again come across me, I soon forgot that I had even seen him. If I thought of him at all, it was only with a malicious joy at his abject condition. He appeared to me to have no prospect before him but starvation or crime, one of which, I conceived, would soon rid the world and myself of a monster.

The London season, and my concerns with Lady Isabella Ainsworth, closed at nearly the same time; but, for want of an object to which my steps could be directed, I remained in London till the beginning of September, intend-

ing then to proceed to Bingwood, where I had never been since my marriage with Lady Erpingham. Indeed my visits there since I was accompanied by Doctor Bubbleby, when he went to take possession of the living, had been transient to a degree. For form's sake, I was twice there in my way from Erpingham to London, during the time it was under repair and improvement. I had no real occasion for going there at present, for I should be unjust to my wife if I omitted to mention, that she actually invited me, with other friends, to pass some time with her at Erpingham, which she considered as her own property. In this invitation it must be allowed, that there was a considerable portion of condescension, when the peculiar circumstances in which I had been so lately placed with Lady Isabella Ainsworth are borne in mind.

My arrival at Bingwood, of which, contrary to my usual custom, I had

previously desired that the tenants should be apprized, was welcomed by Dr. Bubbleby and the principal part of my old friends. Domestic misery soon flies abroad, and even before I left London it was well known that I had ceased to reside under the same roof with my wife, and that my residence in the country, for the future, would be fixed at Bingwood.

They who have had the opportunity of witnessing the vast importance to the apparent welfare of a district, afforded by the presence of a great landed proprietor, will not wonder that even selfish as I was in my habits and disposition, my presence should have diffused a real joy. I have said the *apparent* welfare of a district, because I much doubt whether it be the *real* welfare. It is to be questioned, whether the increased circulation of money occasioned by the residence of a large and wealthy family, counterbalances

the degradation in the moral character of the peasantry, inevitable upon their mingling with servants contaminated by the vices of a capital.

I would by no means infer the non-existence of vicious propensities among the rural inhabitants of the country; on the contrary, I believe that nature has distributed the seeds of good and evil with an equal hand in all directions. But example frequently elicits traits of depravity which without that example might have lain dormant. In a country village it may be as truly said of the living as of the dead,

“Some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest,
“Some Cromwell guiltless of his country’s blood,”

On recollection, however, the quotation is not so well adapted to my purpose as I at first supposed, but as I have written it, I shall not draw my pen through it. My mind was occupied with the bad consequences to be

derived from the contagion of the metropolis, in calling evils into active existence that might have slumbered till the day of judgement. But if by such means, the tongue, or more properly speaking, the pen, of some "mute inglorious Milton" could be set in motion, I should be inclined to risk the experiment, even at the expence of awakening some "guiltless Cromwell."

Dr. Bubbleby received me with his usual complacent smile. It did not appear to me that time had committed the least ravage upon his constitution. There was the same species of vivacious manner, which at first had attracted my attention, and which, had not his real character been developed to me, would still have led me to view him and listen to him with pleasure.

The doctor had very recently taken up his residence at the Parsonage, and had fitted up the house in a costly

manner. "It was now," he said, "a little fit for a christian." By this phrase I apprehend the doctor thought only of *modern* christians, or rather of the benefited clergy of kindred souls with his own, and had forgotten that primitive christianity with its attributes of meekness, charity, and brotherly love had ever existed. But as it is impossible that one person should be enabled to judge of the motives which actuate the conduct of another, I have no right to bring accusations against the doctor which nothing but his own behaviour has justified. God forbid that I should charge any man with hypocrisy, when perhaps it is innate vice alone which guides his actions, and impels him to a line of conduct which his better judgment would condemn. At all events, my business with the doctor is to record him as he is, or as I found him. I have no right to say what he ought to have been.

As I passed by the parsonage on my way to the Abbey, my shameful neglect of Mrs. Farren and her family rushed across my mind, and occasioned sensations with which I would not wish my greatest enemy to be visited. I had promised to attend to her wants and at the time I last saw her, I had determined to repair the injustice I had done to her family, on the disposal of the living to Dr. Bubbleby at her husband's death. But from the moment of my giving the promise, until the instant of my present arrival at Bingwood, I had wholly forgotten that such persons as Mrs. Farren and her family were in existence.

My enquiries by no means tended to reconcile me to myself. Mrs. Farren had, indeed, placed a reliance on my promises, but she had omitted to bring them to my recollection. Too proud to solicit, where solicitation ought not to have been necessary, she sunk un-

der the storm which she could not withstand, Stripped most mercilessly by Dr. Bubbleby of every thing that could be torn from her, she had despairingly left a place to which she had been long an ornament, to seek a refuge no one knew whither. The doctor alone was deaf to humanity, constantly declaring the extent of his losses in taking possession of a living where the most shameful perversions of justice, such as charity and benevolence, —consideration for the distressed and liberality to the humble, had been suffered to exist in despite of self interest, and in defiance of the interests of the church. She had left Bingwood with the respect of the wealthy and the universal benediction of the poor.

Young Farren, who had nothing but his merit to recommend him, and who was wholly unacquainted with those arts without which merit is but an incumbrance, had exerted himself to the

utmost in procuring the means of sheltering his unhappy mother and her family. But as his principles would not permit him to be the pander of vice, and as his morality would not suffer him to be the abettor of indecency, his efforts were wholly unsuccessful. After many unavailing attempts at obtaining any preferment in England, or even a curacy, he had accepted the post of chaplain to one of the condemned regiments stationed in an unhealthy fort on the coast of Africa.

Dr. Bubbleby perceived I was much hurt at the account which had been given me, but mistaking the cause of my uneasiness, observed that it was a shame to breed so many people to a profession already overstocked.

“I declare,” he continued, “I am shocked at the appearance of my curate whenever I see him in the reading desk; and of a week day it is really horrible to see him at a funeral. Lord

Shakebags, who dined with me about a month ago, really thought I encouraged the poor devil in wearing ragged clothes. By the bye, my Lord, I must positively alter that dining room at the parsonage. It is really horrible to place one's friends in a situation, where they can see nothing but tombstones. But as to my curate, your Lordship would hardly judge, by looking at him, that I actually pay him thirty pounds a year, besides allowing old farmer Harrowell fifteen shillings quarterly for his lodging. Really, my Lord these are charges which cut deep into a tolerably good living!"

"I am sorry, Dr. Bubbleby, you did not think of young Farren!"

"Young Farren, my Lord, was his own enemy. His ideas of independence were very well fitted for one of the cloth who was already fitted with a mitre, but totally improper for a person who had only a mitre in his eye.

But pray, my Lord, allow me to ask if your lordship has any interest in a certain quarter. They say that Dr. Hogwash, the rural dean of ——— is past all recovery. If I could meet with any one to back my interest with Mrs. Sparkle, the present sultana, I might perhaps succeed.”

“Is that mode of seeking preferment exactly creditable, doctor?”

“It is the sure mode, my Lord, and you cannot blame a person for making the best use of influence while it lasts. Dr. Waddle not only paid a thousand pounds, but obliged his wife to visit and receive Mrs. Sparkle till he succeeded to the living and prebendary which Dr. Muzzy had just vacated by death. For my own part, I consider that all sin consists in the intention of committing it, and I think every step justifiable which raises a man in the world. As to myself, I profess to be guided by liberal principles, and am one

who never views faults through a magnifying glass."

I was already too well acquainted with the character and disposition of the doctor to be surprized at any thing which fell from his lips. I would willingly have annihilated him, and have placed young Farren, if I could have found him, in his place. But as I could never bring myself to acknowledge an error, even though only an error in judgment, I behaved with all the circumspection I was master of, adhering to the outward forms of civility, while in my heart I loathed the wretch on whose account I had so totally lost sight of justice and prudence.

The doctor told me that he should surprise me by bringing with him to the Abbey some old friends that I little dreamt of seeing. He refused to tell me who they were, as he would not rob me of the pleasure which I should doubt-

less receive from an agreeable surprise.

I could do no less than request that the doctor as well as his friends would honour me with their company on the following day. To this the doctor assented, promising in the name of the party for their punctual attendance.

CHAP. V.***A ROAD TO PREFERMENT.***

I DID not much rack my brain in divining to which of my old acquaintances the doctor alluded. I had none that could create any interest in me, but it so happened that I was assailed by old friends from more quarters than one. My arrival at Bingwood was soon buzzed about the country, and on the second morning I was gratified with a visit from the Earl of Cullymore. I was somewhat at a loss to account for my being thus honoured, particularly as several years had

elapsed since I considered myself on terms of intimacy with him. Lord Cullymore, however, I found had been some years practising a rigid system of economy, for the best of all possible reasons, and had made the important discovery that his expences were considerably curtailed in making use of other people's houses instead of his own.

From a phæton and four, accompanied by two grooms in splendid liveries, his lordship had gradually descended to a one horse chaise, attended by a lad in no livery at all. I do not apprehend that his lordship was anywhere much distinguished as a welcome guest, but the way in which he usually made good his quarters was such as insured him admittance, and as his feelings were not of the most sensitive order, I imagine, that it required a hint of rather a broad description, such as a total removal, or

some other mode equally effectual, to get rid of him.

My having the pleasure of then seeing him, was occasioned by the removal of Sir Jeffrey Henclack and his family to the Continent. A watering place would not answer the purpose, as Lord Cullymore proposed to accompany them. Thus unhoused, he made his way to Bingwood, merely, as he stated, when he shook my hand on alighting from his humble vehicle, to stay a single night on his way to Lord Snuffleton's.

I could not do otherwise than express myself gratified at the honour he was doing me, and as I was not at that time aware of the extreme difficulty of dislodging him, I was rather pleased than otherwise, at the presence of a person, who would assist me in finding entertainment for Doctor Bubbleby and my old acquaintances, whoever

they were, that intended to honour me with their company.

About half an hour before dinner, I perceived Doctor Bubbleby making his way across the lawn, accompanied by two ladies and a gentleman. The latter I soon recognized as Mr. Purry, and as the party approached, I soon traced the features of Mrs. Dunder. To the second lady I was an entire stranger, but I supposed she could be no other than the worthy helpmate of the worthy doctor.

Under this last impression, when I rose to pay my respects to Mrs. Dunder, and to hold out my hand to Mr. Purry, I addressed the other lady with, "Mrs. Bubbleby I presume."

The Doctor blushed and affected to smile, assuring me he was not so happy; the lady he had the honour to present to me, never having blest any man with her charms and accomplishments, but still under the appellation

of Miss Lavinia Packthread, continued to dart her unerring shafts to such as rashly exposed themselves within the range of her powers.

I made my bow to Miss Lavinia as to a stranger, and when the doctor had finished his eulogium, I looked up at the person who was the object of it. I confess I saw nothing particularly attractive in a tall thin female of about thirty-five years of age, but I gave a tacit consent to the doctor's account by making a second bow, much lower than the first.

I expressed myself, as in duty bound, highly delighted at seeing my old friends, and we all exchanged mutual congratulations at the little alteration which time had been able to effect. Mr. Purry, indeed, did not pay me many compliments on my youthful appearance, but Mrs. Dunder assured me that I did not look a day older than when I was at Harrowgate.

I made the whole party known to Lord Cullymore, and then asked the Doctor if we should not have the honour of seeing Mrs. Bubbleby.

The Doctor again coloured, and observed that Mrs. Bubbleby was unfortunately from home.

I saw plainly that Mrs. Bubbleby was a tender point with the Doctor, particularly as neither the ladies nor Mr. Purry, made any allusions to her. I did not conceive there was any harm in Mrs. Dunder choosing to visit the Doctor under such circumstances, but that Miss Lavinia Packthread should be a visitor during the absence of the mistress of the house, struck me as being somewhat extraordinary, particularly as Miss Lavinia had by no means lost the traces of having had in her youth considerable pretensions to beauty.

As I have represented Miss Lavinia as only thirty-five, and spoke of the

traces of former beauty, I dare say, I shall be reminded of the many lovely women whose ages much exceed what I have mentioned. I have no objection to agree to the truth of this proposition, but if my memory does not fail me, I am inclined to think that the love-inspiring race of females, who at that age have retained their powers of captivating, and perhaps have had those powers increase with their years, have not been doomed by fate or caprice to a life of single blessedness. I have no dislike to such as are denominated old maids, nor do I think they merit the aspersions which are usually levelled at them. Their situation arises more from misfortune than from fault, and it is no matter of wonder that misfortune should sour the temper. As I have never by marriage contributed to the happiness of a woman, I have probably no right to extol the advantages of a state, of the blessings of which I

am confessedly ignorant, but I firmly believe that neither man nor woman lead a single life from inclination.

Having broke the thread of my story in honour of Miss Lavinia, I shall take the liberty, before I resume it, of saying a word or two relative to Dr. Bubbleby and his fair lady, which as it is not exactly intertwined with my own actions, may as well be mentioned here as any where else. Not that I heard of the circumstances I am about to mention till long after the period of which in the natural course of things I ought to be relating, yet as Doctor Bubbleby is now properly before me,—as I entertain towards him a dislike almost amounting to hatred, and a contempt close verging upon disgust,—as after this I shall have done with him for some time to come,—all these reasons combined, induce me to get him off my hands for the present, that he may not come across my mind at times

when I would willingly forget that such a being is in existence. I am aware that I have been guilty of anticipating my story in more than one instance, but I question if sticking closer to chronology would have made it more intelligible. At all events, I will maintain my indefeasible right of telling my own story in my own way.

How I came by my information is of little or no consequence, it is sufficient that I am satisfied with its being true, and I leave the reader to judge whether the account was calculated to raise the Doctor in my esteem, or whether it was likely to encrease the contempt and disgust, with which I had viewed him, previous to my becoming acquainted with the circumstances I am going to relate.

Doctor Bubbleby was the offspring of a damsel, who superintended the domestic arrangements of the Vicar of ———. Scandal had busied her-

self with the worthy Vicar, but had not been sufficiently powerful to affix the bantling upon him, as the chastity of the Doctor's mother was not exactly clear from stain. But the Vicar was not devoid of benevolence, as he placed little Theophilus, who was christened after himself, at the charity school.

The death of the Vicar, before Theophilus had attained his tenth year, threw him upon the wide world; as his mother, having to seek a fresh connection for herself, could not be expected to take upon her the charge of supporting a boy, who, in this manufacturing country, ought to be able to maintain himself. Theophilus was therefore turned adrift, and, at a loss for present subsistence, joined a set of personages who were in the practice of levying general contributions, under the appellation of gypsies.

A vagrant life was suited to the pliant

disposition of the young Theophilus ; and had it not been for a trifling accident, the hero, in spite of his diminutive stature, might have risen to some rank in the army of beggars. That he was abundantly supplied with cunning, I had ample proofs, and could readily believe that he would have been one of the brightest ornaments to such a society. The accident I allude to was the murder of a traveller, whose resistance to a robbery rendered murder inevitable, at least in the opinion of the gang. The retreat not being conducted with the requisite degree of care and circumspection, the party, including Theophilus, were seized within a few hours of the perpetration of the deed, and safely lodged in "durance vile," under strong presumptive evidences of guilt.

The honour of the gang had been proverbial, and it might have been questioned if the presumptive proofs

which could be adduced against them, would have been sufficient to convict them, had not the dread of punishment and the hope of escape, operated upon the mind of Theophilus. The boy was then between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and had already felt that the world was before him. Knowing that his character for integrity was lost among the gypsey fraternity, if he alone evaded the fangs of justice, and certain if he did not evade them, there was no hope of further preferment, he sent a private intimation to the magistrate by whom he and his friends had been committed, desiring a secret conference.

A piteous tale which accompanied the recital of the murder, inclined the magistrate to look upon the betrayer of his comrades with a favourable eye. Theophilus gave the justice to understand, that his parents, he could recollect, were in a state of affluence when

he was stolen from them, but that he was too young to remember either their names or their place of abode.

The consequences were, that Theophilus was admitted a king's evidence—his former associates stood candidates for the gallows, to which they were duly elected, and Theophilus himself was received under the protection of the justice, not only on account of his youth, but also because the boy had led his new patron to believe that his life would be in danger from the vengeance of the gypsey fraternity.

Theophilus conducted himself for some time with the greatest circumspection. He had, indeed, so won upon his patron, that the latter exerted himself to discover the parents of his protégé. Such an event, however, was not very probable, as the story had no better foundation than what the brain of Theophilus himself could supply. However, his end was so far answered,

that the suspicions to which his former habits and recent situation had given rise, gradually disappeared. The hand of kindness was held out to him, and it was his own fault that every opportunity for his advancement was not afforded him.

But the future Rector of Bingwood thought perhaps in the same way with the philosopher, who maintained that there was a short cut to the intellectual regions ; and judged that the road to honours and distinctions was equally concise. But let his motives be what they may, the result will speak for itself. He had contrived to worm himself into trust and confidence ; and his first step at obtaining them was to abuse them. His patron discovered the elopement of Theophilus by the state of his bureau, which was emptied of all its portable contents, including a considerable sum of ready money, and some valuable trinkets.

The next public appearance of Theophilus was on the death of his former patron. He had indulged in privacy till he was enabled to venture forth, without fear of contributing to the general entertainment, by an exhibition of himself at the bar of a court of justice. How this interval of his life, which lasted about twelve years, was filled up, can be only known to himself; but, on his emerging from obscurity, he was installed into the office of valet de chambre and principal pimp to the Earl of Scuttlebone.

The deranged state of the noble Earl's affairs, imperiously called, not only for retrenchment and economy, but also for reparation. The latter was obtained by exchanging nobility for ready cash, through the medium of marriage. The dismissal of the reigning sultana was, however, a point insisted upon, as well as a reform in the establishment.

The Earl was not in a situation to refuse compliance with any conditions which were demanded of him. The only two persons who could give him any disturbance were, his mistress and his pimp. The most natural course was to unite their interests together, and to make the same provision serve for both. The Earl sounded his valet, who consented to receive the lady, for better and for worse, in case the Earl would procure him to be ordained, and would settle an annuity upon him, until he provided him with a living of at least four hundred a year.

As Lord Scuttlebone's interest, both in church and state, were considerable, he was charmed with the moderation of his attendant. Dispatching him therefore into the country, he soon became a deacon. The great difficulty was now past. His lordship, who was a man of the strictest honour, put his

hand to the annuity deed, and Bubbleby, who on this occasion was no less a man of honour, espoused the lady. |

In due time, he was placed in a state to receive the first living which should enable his lordship to cancel the annuity deed. In the mean while, the merits of the new clergyman had spread far and wide, and had been sufficient to induce one of the Scotch colleges to transmit him a diploma, which allowed him to place L. L. D. to the end of his name, simply upon the payment of some trifling fees.

Mrs. Bubbleby had considerable claims upon the kindness of her late protector; it was therefore with pleasure that his Lordship saw her treated with marks of outward attention, by the husband assigned to her. The conduct of Bubbleby was indeed exemplary, until, by the interest of his patron, who exerted his influence to the

utmost, he obtained a living of a greater value than was agreed upon.

The Doctor then threw off the mask, and treated his wife with the greatest inhumanity, never addressing her but by the most opprobrious epithets. Her spirits sunk under a series of ill usage, and she tacitly suffered herself to be driven to a state of absolute seclusion, assigning as a reason, according to the mandate of the Doctor, the love of retirement.

As the Doctor's living was in a part of Yorkshire not much frequented by those who, from previous knowledge, could cast a slur upon his character, he was enabled to make his way in his new neighbourhood, and to assume an air of respectability. But as the immediate vicinity of his living did not allow a full scope for his talents, or hold out to him the hopes of farther preferment, he usually indulged himself in excur-

sions to places of public resort, with a view of insinuating himself into the good graces of such as were likely to forward him in the profession which he had chosen. How well he succeeded with me, I have already mentioned ; but I never learnt that he was equally successful with any one else. Probably the dread of discovery kept him aloof from playing a deep game. He had been, however, fortunate in some minor speculations, and had received solid testimonies of esteem, in the form of legacies, from several *valued friends*.

On his taking up his residence at Bingwood, he had brought his wife *pro forma*, and had shown her for a few days ; but she was soon consigned to her obscurity, leaving the Doctor free and uncontrolled. Mrs. Bubbleby, he told every body, was so attached to her former place of residence, that she was averse to leaving it ; and he loved her too dearly to oppose her wishes :

but necessity compelled him to remain a certain time at Bingwood, and consequently to act in a manner totally dissonant to his warmest wishes.

I imagine that when I had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Dunder, and Mr. Purry, they were in training for a thumping legacy. As to Miss Lavinia, she was perhaps intended for a second Mrs. Bubbleby, in case the Doctor had been fortunate enough to have got rid of the first. But Mrs. Bubbleby's heart was proof against all the attempts of the Doctor to break it, and she managed to live in spite of insult and ill usage.

By the same means which have enabled me to give "some account" of the Doctor, I learnt that he was not more successful either with the widow or the West Indian. The former, shortly after her visit to Bingwood, having married her footman, to the great joy of the party-coloured race, taking care, in the first place, to secure her property

to her own disposal. The friends of the lady were grievously offended at her choice; but this she professed to wonder at, seeing that he was a promising young man. His progress on the fiddle, when he had only been two months a student, being a striking mark of what his natural genius could surmount, when his mind was properly directed in a course of genteel accomplishments.

With Mr. Purry the Doctor was still more unlucky; for the old bachelor for several years paid an autumnal visit to Bingwood; but on the first hint of expectations, the friendship which had united their kindred souls together, was instantly snapt. The Doctor's hopes were entirely blighted, and the fortune which the West Indian proposed to divide among his mulatto progeny remained untouched.

Mr. Purry's feelings, however, were not over-nice; and it was some time before he could understand the nu-

merous hints of the Doctor, that his room was preferable to his company. At last the Doctor succeeded, by requesting the loan of two hundred pounds on his note for five years. This had the desired effect. Mr. Purry, who had just been boasting of his riches, now had not a shilling that he could call his own ; and notwithstanding he had expressed his intention of remaining at Bingwood till after Christmas, he was suddenly summoned to town upon indispensable business. The Doctor chuckled at the success of his stratagem. The dear friends parted, to meet—as strangers.

CHAP. VI.***PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCE.***

IN the regular course of events, I ought perhaps to put upon record some further "account" of the beings who were congregated under my roof. I can recollect some expressions of the Earl of Cullymore, which disgusted me, and some verbal quibbles from the reverend Doctor which sickened me. As to the rest of the party, they were to all intents and purposes neutral. The occurrences of the day, as they did not afford me the slightest portion of amusement, though present, are not

likely to yield entertainment to those who were absent. I shall therefore dismiss my friends to the parsonage, and the Earl of Cullymore to his downy couch, without the smallest portion of regret, and continue my story.

At the time of my marriage, and pending the arrangement of my household, I had made use of all my interest, and had succeeded in having Giles installed into the office of butler. This was not accomplished without a very considerable opposition on the part of Lady Erpingham, and her confidential advisers, who all expressed themselves unwilling that a post of such trust and confidence should be yielded to a person who had nothing but my recommendation in his favour. As it was the only point on which I showed any symptoms of obstinacy, it was graciously acceded to me, on condition, however, that I was never to interfere hereafter, either directly or indirectly,

in any future arrangements which might seem good unto the Countess. I agreed generally to the terms, which were reduced to writing, to prevent the possibility of any mistake. The dismissal of my valet was the first act of the arbitrary power thus obtained. His crime was an offence, of what nature I was never informed, against her ladyship's maid. I remonstrated; but the articles between us convinced me that I must submit. This I did with a very ill grace, but it was inevitable. As I had no great inclination, however, for a servant of her ladyship's choosing, to be immediately about my person, I purchased the right of nominating my own domestic by some further concessions, her ladyship still reserving to herself the right of dismissal.

Of the fidelity and attachment of Giles, I had never entertained the smallest doubt; and had any further proofs of his regard been needful, they

would have been found in his quitting his "darling" stable, at my solicitation, to take upon himself the superintendence of the wine and plate; and likewise at his quitting a situation of ease, comfort, and regularity, which he had filled, even to the satisfaction of Lady Erpingham, when I wholly severed my establishment from that of my wife. Giles then was reinstated in his former post, and cheerfully resumed his double capacity of groom and valet.

About a week after I had been at Bingwood, one of the footmen, after much circumlocution, and numberless professions of sorrow at having an invidious duty imposed upon him, but which his strict ideas of honesty, no less than his regard for my welfare rendered unavoidable, told me that he strongly suspected Giles of having converted to his own use a considerable quantity of plate, and other valuable

property. Aware that Giles had given up his late trust with the highest character for honesty and integrity from Lady Erpingham herself, who, notwithstanding his having belonged to me, would willingly have detained him, I treated the information in the way it really merited, and, as at first, I thought it really deserved.

But when the ruin of an individual is determined upon, proofs can always be showered thick as hail. To one who had suffered, as I had done, from misplaced confidence, "trifles light as air" were calculated to appear in the light of "confirmation strong as holy writ." Although I openly repelled the insinuation, it did not fail of making a due impression upon a mind awake to suspicion. I despised the tale-bearer, but at the same time I did not disregard the tale; and on hearing assurances from other quarters, which corroborated the testimony of the first informer, I

considered that it was high time to institute a strict enquiry into the assertions which had been made, with the intent of leading to the total exculpation of Giles, or as I dreaded, to his condemnation.

With a view of making the honesty of Giles stand or fall by the circumstances which could be momentarily developed, I dispatched him upon a sleeveless errand, which would occupy the whole day, in order that in the presence of the housekeeper and of the footman, who had first awakend my suspicions, I might proceed unmolested in my search. We carefully examined his pantry, of which he kept the key, by means of a set of picklocks, which the footman pretended to have found in the bed-room of Giles, but which his dexterity in their application ought to have convinced me, that they belonged to himself. Nothing, however, was discoverable ; every thing appeared

regular in the extreme ; nor was there anything which indicated the slightest approach to guilt or concealment. From the pantry we adjourned to Giles's bed-chamber. The same means which enabled me to ascertain the honesty of Giles in his pantry, served to discover his dishonesty elsewhere. To my astonishment, as well as to my regret, in one of his boxes I perceived one of my largest table-cloths cut into four pieces, together with a watch which I valued and cherished because it had been admired by Lydia Berrington, and several articles of plate, of a description which my usual habits of living did not render necessary to my table.

In addition to what I saw before me, I was told that Giles had forwarded a heavy box by the waggon, directed to the sister of his mother, who lived in the neighbourhood of Whitechapel.

I could no longer doubt the evidence of my own senses, and was determined

to punish this further breach of my confidence in an exemplary manner; more particularly as I detected the hypocrisy of Giles, who on many occasions, had exposed, without mercy, the delinquencies of several of the minor domestics, and had procured their dismissal with disgrace, and loss of character. I recalled these occurrences to my mind, in order that my previous regard might not tempt me to swerve from the line of conduct, which I considered myself called upon to adopt; not only as an injured individual, but as a person whose station in life required him to hold out an example of justice and decision.

I ordered the box to be carefully replaced, and its contents laid in the same manner as when we opened it. My next step was to attend a neighbouring justice of peace, in order to procure the requisite assistance in tracing the box which was transmitted to

Giles's aunt. The deposition of the footman was taken, and proper notice of the box, and of its direction, was sent to the police offices in London. It was seized at the moment of its delivery at the place of its destination, and after an inventory of its contents was taken, it was returned to me at Bingwood.

The box contained plate and valuables to a considerable amount, and were altogether of a description of which apparently he, and he alone, could have got into his possession. To make the matter more certain, and to place his guilt beyond the possibility of dispute, the direction to his aunt which was affixed to the box, was in his own hand-writing.

The box from London, and that in his room, in which my property had been discovered, I desired might be brought into my study. On the return of Giles I asked him to empty the con-

tents of both boxes on the floor. He obeyed without the least hesitation or embarrassment.

He gazed with astonishment at the scene before him, but certainly betrayed no symptoms of guilt. He looked from one thing to another, until at last casting his eyes upon the direction of the box which had been forwarded to London, and recognizing his hand writing, he exclaimed, "Christ, who has done this! What can I say, my Lord? How shall I obtain belief! But as God shall hear me I am innocent!"

His look and manner disarmed me. I considered him to be guilty, but I was far from being sorry that there was no witness to our conference.

"There is no occasion," said I, "to add falsehood to your crimes. Your acts speak but too plainly for themselves. They are of a nature which admit of no explanation. But we have

drawn our subsistence from the same breast,—that consideration, and that alone, saves you from the horrors of ignominious proceedings. Think yourself fortunate that you meet with lenity when justice is all that your crimes could expect. Your arrears of wages, be they what they may, shall be forwarded to your mother. You may remove your clothes ; it can be done immediately. It will then be your interest to place yourself where we may never meet again. You are now safe, but I will not answer for your safety eight and forty hours hence.”

“ My Lord,” cried the poor wretch, falling on his knees with a look which implored for mercy and forgiveness, “ there is a power above that can read all hearts,——mine——”

“ Begone ! another moment and the consequences may be fatal.”

I applied my hand to the bell—Giles clasped his hands together in despair

and rushed out of the room. He immediately left the house, but I gave directions that whatever belonged to him should be sent to his mothers', to whom, notwithstanding my rage I was desirous of softening down her son's delinquency; and for that purpose gave the servants to understand that a mention of what had passed would be far from meeting my approbation. Perhaps I took the most effectual method of making the circumstances known. At all events the disgrace of Giles and the causes which led to it were not only well known but were magnified out of all reasonable proportion.

The exit of poor Giles was witnessed by the other servants, and particularly by the footman who had lodged the information against him, with a sort of malignant joy. I confess I did not feel exactly satisfied with myself, but I did not see that I could have acted otherwise in the face of such incontrovertible

evidence. Giles was not popular among his fellow servants. This I used to attribute to his fidelity towards his master, although I will do him the justice to say that he never complained of a fellow servant till all hopes of amendment by means of persuasion were ineffectual. His word with me was law. I therefore felt doubly hurt at being again betrayed.

As a reward for the honesty and integrity of the footman who had been the accuser of Giles, I promoted him to the situation which the dismissal of the latter had left vacant. My penetration was never sufficient to guard me against imposition. The merits of a person who discovered a cheat which had been practised upon me, were undoubted, although they sometimes acted upon me in different ways. If the discovery redounded to my shame, I became an irreconcilable foe to the discoverers; on the other hand, if no dis-

eyes dropped towards the ground, and she was silent.

As the mother could allege nothing further in his defence, but on the contrary, seemed satisfied with his guilt, my task was comparatively easy, although it was not without some painful sensations, that I closed the subject in a way that I felt due to my character and consequence, as the head of a family. To have forgiven dishonesty in one instance, would have been the effectual means of laying myself open to depredations of every description. Perhaps I enter more largely upon this point than necessity requires; but, as the result proved me to be deceived, I am anxious to extenuate the harshness of my behaviour, particularly to the unoffending mother, against whom no charge certainly existed.

I dismissed the mother with the fol-

lowing words—"Send your son where he can provide for himself. His clothes shall be sent to him, and you yourself may now receive his wages. At present he is secure. He shall even enjoy the fruits of former dishonesty unmolested—but henceforward let me hear no more of him. The first time his name escapes your lips, in my presence, will be the last. Your annuity will be the penalty of a departure from this injunction."

The poor old creature shook her head as I put her son's wages into her hand. She would have declined receiving it, but I insisted. Fetching a deep sigh, she departed broken-hearted.

CHAP. VII.

POSITIVE PROOF.

AS I am beginning a new chapter with the Earl of Cullymore upon my hands, it is incumbent upon me to get rid of him in some way or other. This in reality was attended with no small portion of difficulty. In the present case I can easily dismiss him, and shall take the present opportunity of soon doing so, in order that he may give me no farther trouble.

Lord Cullymore passed the first night at Bingwood in his way to Snuffton park. The second night he yield-

I to my solicitations of assisting me in the amusement of Doctor Bubbleby and his friends. For the third, fourth, fifth, and all the subsequent nights for the three months, in which he honoured Bingwood with his presence, I had nothing to thank but his own inclination and convenience. Perhaps the Earl had no taste for artificial volcanoes, or perhaps.—— But at Bingwood he staid, even after I had left it for the winter season.

His stay, however, interfered but little with my own arrangements; he desired me to stand upon no ceremony with him. The country was delightful, he was charmed with it, and could not think of quitting it. He made himself so perfectly at home, in every respect, that it sometimes happened, we never met for a whole week together. The Earl was frequently kind enough to invite friends to meet *him*, and he occasionally did me the honour

of requesting my company to join them. This I invariably declined in the hope, a vain one indeed, of shaming him into quitting a place where my conduct must have convinced him he was far from welcome. However, I will do him the justice to say that he never molested me in the slightest degree. He kindly left me in the entire possession of the suit of apartments, which I usually inhabited, and quietly fixed himself in a range of rooms in a different part of the abbey. He saved me the trouble of giving any orders for him, by giving them himself, and I do not doubt if the winter with its dullness had not driven him away, he would have staid till doomsday, in case he had so long preserved himself from the fangs of the grave digger. All I have, therefore, to do in this case is to take my final leave of his Lordship, as of a person with whom for the future

I am to be considered as wholly unconnected.

With Giles I had felt myself again deceived, in spite of all my pretended foresight. The amount of the deception, indeed, compared with former occasions was hardly worth observing, but it was still deception, and being so, it galled me.

I had often heard of the vast advantage of practical over theoretical knowledge, and was now convinced that experience alone could guard against the snares with which the world abounds. He must be a dolt, indeed, who is vulnerable twice in the same place, and if he is twice open to the same deception, it is no matter how often he is exposed to it, or how much he suffers by it. In all such cases, if there is not sense enough to make a madman, there is at all events folly enough to stamp the idiot. Here I can speak boldly, for I can safely declare, that I was

never twice the victim of the same cheat. Villiers, Doctor Bubbleby, Miss Henderson, Mr. Nalder, &c. &c. &c. all passed before me with the order and regularity of Banquo's race of Kings, and although each might bear a strong family resemblance to their great prototype the arch-deceiver, there was no one feature in common between them. In the various species of fraud to which I had been exposed, I may be said to have been inoculated. Once diseased, I was proof against a similar infection. But I beg it to be understood, that in no one case did I ever meet with the mild vaccine treatment. Mine was constantly the variolous, and that of the most inflammatory kind.

But tropes and figures, if they were showered down upon me, would not help me one jot in my story. It is necessary, therefore, if I ever mean to get to an end, that I descend to plain matter of fact. To a man who has

never wandered in the wilds of fiction, or culled the field of illustration, this may be an easy matter, but to one who has got into the midst of a third volume, the case is attended with considerable difficulty, particularly to a person who has never been in the habit of reducing his ideas to the level of a syllogism, or exalting them to the level of an hypothesis. Extremes they say meet, but Heaven only knows what will become of the middle parts when the imagination is once set afloat. But on this point, I appeal to the world at large, in no way committing either myself, or my opinions.

Determined to guard against a similar occurrence, I caused a room of extraordinary strength to be erected. It communicated only with my study, and was composed of materials apparently capable of resisting the attacks of fire, or thieves. I felt pleased with my place of safety, and congratulated my

self on my prudence, when I deposited there the newly received half year's rent of my maternal estates. In addition to this, I caused an inventory to be taken of all my effects, and made the different servants responsible for whatever was committed to their care. Such of my plate as was not likely to be called into immediate use, I likewise placed in my strong room for security.

A few nights after I had thus satisfied myself that I should be enabled to bid defiance to any attacks upon my property; either direct or indirect, was awoke by an unusual noise in my anti-chamber. No one had access there but the successor of Giles; but I was not allowed time for reflection, for before I could call for assistance, I found myself gagged and bound. A voice which I thought familiar to my ear demanded the key of the strong room. The only light in the room was emitted

from a dark lantern, but it was sufficient to enable me to perceive that the faces of those who had seized me, were disguised with crape. The person who demanded the key, was checked by another who pointed to a small cabinet in which I usually deposited it. I had neglected that evening to place it there. A pistol was then applied to my head, with an intimation of the consequences which would certainly follow my withholding the desired information. I pointed to my coat. A third emptied the pockets, and seized the key.

Two of them then crept softly out of the room, and I suppose made their way to my study. The third was left as a guard over me, an office which he performed with a pistol within two inches of my head. With the exception of the first demand, the whole of their proceedings were conducted in perfect silence.

In a few minutes, during which I

hardly breathed, I heard a bustle below stairs. "Curse their stupid heads," was muttered by my guard, but without any change in his position. I then heard footsteps gently creeping towards my room. Two fresh personages entered on tiptoe, disguised in a similar manner, but with the fore finger of one hand across the mouth, and the fore finger of the other hand extended, seemingly directing me to make no noise. In an instant I saw my guard pinioned by his two arms, and the pistol wrenched from his hands. This action was succeeded by the figure of Giles advancing towards me. It had struck me that the parties were well acquainted with the house, and now every thing seemed explained. Giles I thought had taken ample vengeance upon me, for refraining from punishing him as his crimes deserved.

But as usual, I was mistaken, Giles unbound me, and loosened the gag

from my mouth. Still believing him to be criminal, my rage vented itself in reproaches upon him, and I dared him to finish the business he had begun. He made no reply, but taking up some of my clothes, and helping me to half dress myself, he led me to my study. We were followed by the persons, who dragged on my guard.

Lights had been brought, and I found myself in the middle of upwards of a dozen men, all of them armed with bludgeons, and one or two of them with pistols. The three I had at first seen were held by the others. The crape was taken from their faces, and discovered to me the countenances of Villiers, Peters, and the accuser of Giles.

“Now my Lord,” said Giles, “who is the guilty person?”

I was thunderstruck, and unable to utter a sound.

“To prison with us,” cried Villiers,

“too much time has already been wasted in nonsense.”

On examination, I found that the remainder of the assemblage was composed of my tenants and their labourer whom Giles had brought with him for my preservation. I therefore considered that the villains would be safe for the rest of the night in their custody. In the morning they might be taken before a magistrate and committed to prison. I could now punish the crime of Villiers, without exposing myself to my folly, and I was determined that no human power should release him from my grasp.

But to avoid the possibility of escape I resolved on no consideration to quit sight of the scoundrels for an instant. The remainder of the night I determined to pass in my study. My clothes were brought down to me; and I dressed in their presence. The necessary refreshment was brought for

the men, in which all partook with the exception of Villiers, who scornfully rejected it.

In the morning I sent to see if Lord Cullymore had been disturbed by the occurrences of the night. Word was brought me that he was no where to be found. His bed had been slept in, but was empty, and none of the servants had seen him go out. I caused fresh search to be made, when he was discovered, with his clothes all rolled up together, under the bed, and laying in as small a space as possible. On being assured that every thing was safe, he ventured forth, and on further hearing that all the robbers were secured, he became as bold as a lion, and offered his assistance in conveying them to a place of confinement. This I declined, and the Earl returned to his usual avocations.

At an early hour we conveyed our prisoners to the nearest magistrate.

They were immediately committed to the county gaol, to take their trial at the next assizes, which as they were at a distance of several months would allow them time for repentance.

Thus ended the last attempt of the scorpion to prey upon me.

Giles naturally looked for his reward, and expected to be re established in my good opinion. But I had once thought him guilty. There was nothing in what had passed to exculpate him from the charges which had been previously preferred against him. The hand writing upon the box was no less forcible than the hand writing upon the wall. I was willing to give him credit for having saved me on the present occasion, but I rather attributed his interference in this instance to a desire of having the coast left clear to himself, than to any real regard my to welfare. "Honour among thieves," I thought might be a truism,

with the particular individuals of a gang, but where one gang forestalled the labours of another, I imagined that self interest would weigh down all regard for the *honour* of the profession in general.

Poor Giles left me. I do not think I even thanked him for his timely assistance. I was afterwards informed that in a fit of despair, he had entered on board a ship of war, and that he had died of the yellow fever in the West Indies. My giving way to self-reproach would be of no service to the individual whom I certainly wronged; but it was my fate to place a confidence where it was abused, and to refuse it where it was due.

CHAP. VIII.

EXPLANATION.

NOTWITHSTANDING all my care, my victim escaped the hands of justice. His pistols were taken from him and his pockets emptied, but his person was neglected to be searched. Immediately on his arrival at the gaol he had requested that he might be furnished with the materials for writing, and begged that he should be disturbed on no account. The following morning he was found a corpse. A paper which had contained some corrosive powder was laying on the floor. He had been supplied with the regular gaol al-

lowance of bread and water. The former was untouched, but the latter had been drank, and a sediment was found at the bottom of the jug. The body bore evident marks of his having died in great agony. I blamed the gaoler for having left him to himself, and in the possession of the means of self destruction, but it seemed that at his earnest desire he had been conducted to a solitary cell, assigning as a reason that he wished to be undisturbed in what he was about to write.

The person who brought me the intelligence that Villiers was no more, put the following letter into my hand.

“When it is considered that the *wisest* of mankind are liable to self-deception, it cannot be expected that those to whom nature has been less bountiful, should be more fortunate in their career of life. Fate ordained that you should be my dupe, from the first hour of our intercourse, even to my latest breath, for you are disap-

pointed in satiating that spirit of revenge which has never ceased to gnaw upon your heart. I know you well, and I early knew you to be the thing you now begin to suspect yourself. You suited my purpose, or I never should have studied your temper and disposition, but without that study I never could have gained that ascendancy over your mind, which I think you will hardly deny me to have once possessed. You became, indeed, my willing slave, but the instability of your disposition convinced me that my power would be of short duration. Your friendship I knew was ardent, but I was well aware that your hatred would be unbounded. Can you blame me if, under such circumstances, I employed my hours to the best advantage, and that I exerted my influence on every point where I could expect a return for the waste of time, and the use of ability. Your fortune was no-

ble, and it required but little trouble in the situation in which you had placed me, to obtain from you a noble property. My gains were immense. They were far beyond what your imagination can picture to yourself. But with your money, I unfortunately incumbered myself with the folly and improvidence of its former owner. Like yourself I was duped. You may, perhaps, feel a considerable degree of astonishment, at my venturing to make such an assertion to you, but you may nevertheless depend upon my veracity, when I inform you that greater rogues than myself are to be found in the world, and you may bless your stars that you fell to my share, instead of being consigned to the merciless fangs of a more complete adept."

"The commission which I received from every tradesman with whom you had any dealings, I considered to be my due. It is what would have been

allowed to your confidential servant in case I had not usurped the position of "bear-leader." Besides, your method of estimating the value of things, was in proportion to their cost. It was, therefore, an act of charity on my part to encourage a satisfaction, which must instantly have vanished when the real worth was known."

"But independent of the commission I received from the tradesmen, which, by the bye, in case of accident I generally secured in the first instance, there was a source of entertainment of which, most probably, I never entertained a suspicion. I never touched a card or a dice without my previous acquiescence, which was regularly purchased by the fourth part of your losings in all cases, and by a larger proportion when I lent my personal aid in fleecing. You will remember, on one occasion that I questioned the dice. They

cut open before you, and found perfect. The false dice which had been used, I secreted, and substituted the true ones, which were examined. But these are trifling things. I shall pass, therefore, to the occurrence at ——— House. That was a master-piece, and nothing but the immense amount could have awakened suspicion in a mind like yours. The scheme was mine, and by me were the drugs which occasioned your stupefaction, provided. But I was outwitted. My fifth share of the spoil was withheld from me, and I was dared to the exposure. Who would have believed me? Who would have supposed for an instant, that such a circumstance was even possible, much less probable.”

“ This affair to me was a serious injury, for I not only missed my due, but it had the effect of materially lessening my profits by weaning you entirely from the gaming table. It did

more, for it rendered you suspicious, and I speedily saw that my reign was drawing towards a close. I was fully aware of your sentiments, and well knew that I had no time to lose. On the rent day I saw that I was watched, and pleased myself with the idea of eluding your penetration. The sum of money with which you will allow me to have ingeniously absconded, passed into the hands of the rascally attorney, who took out the writ upon which you was arrested. It was the same man whom the bailiff recommended, and introduced to you. A sudden fit of honesty seized him, and he declared his intention of returning the money to you, rather than to me. He did better with it. You would have wasted it; I should have spent it — he kept it! I will, however, do him the justice to say, that he acted like a man of honour in facilitating my escape."

"The money I drew from the bankers, I placed in the possession of the person for whom your *carte blanche* was originally intended. It was therefore only applying it to its destined use. With your *friend* Miss Emma Henderson I had long cohabited. By her the money was placed in the hands of a broker, for the purchase of foreign bills. The broker absconded, leaving others in the lurch as well as myself."

"You see how unlucky your property had already been to me, but I have not done yet. By the defalcation of the broker, I was reduced to what remained of my general savings, which, as Miss Henderson was not remarkable for economy, had diminished to only four thousand pounds. With this sum, my companion and myself embarked for **Hamburgh**."

"It had happened fortunately, that in the contemplation of a flight, I had procured some foreign bills of ex-

change, and a letter of credit, previous to my last journey to Bingwood; I might otherwise have been at a considerable loss as to the means of conveying out of the country the little which remained to me. But my companion knew only of the bills of exchange. You, my Lord, will bear witness to her fascinations, and will therefore duly appreciate the regret which I felt on her leaving me, particularly when you know the mode in which her retreat was conducted. On waking one morning I found myself alone. The lady had given orders that I should on no account be disturbed, as I was extremely unwell. My portmanteau was laying open upon a chair, and on examining its contents, I found that my pocket-book had disappeared. You may perhaps think that I took immediate measures to arrest the progress of the fugitive. But that was far from being the case. I knew the talents

and precautions of the person with whom I had to deal too well, to idly waste my time in a fruitless pursuit. Had we been together, we should have inevitably spent every thing we possessed ; and, as it was, she only took her moiety. On the whole, I have no fault to find with her, although I will attribute her only taking the half more to accident than inclination. If she had been assured that she had left me a beggar, I question whether it would have made any alteration in her conduct.

“ The money with which the letter of credit supplied me, supported me for a considerable time. As it diminished, I saw the necessity of doing something for a subsistence ; but my indolence proved a bar to any active exertions. I visited various parts of the continent, and looked in all directions to find your equal ; but I will own that I was not very sanguine in

my expectations. Such a personage of rare occurrence. Indeed, my Lord I do not flatter you. Such a combination as centred in yourself, is seldom to be met with. The world, it is true, abounds with fools, and exuberates with madmen; but it rarely happens that they have been equal favorites of fortune with yourself. About your Lordship there was something peculiar, and that something I cannot describe. At all events, it appears that you were predestined to be cheated, and that he was predestined to cheat you.

“The abilities which were the means of ushering me into high life, had grown rusty for want of use, and, according to the state of my pockets, I passed through all the different stages, from the gentleman to the beggar. You parted from me under the appearance of the first, and you again met me under the character of the second. I was starving; for even among beggars the

are favourites of fortune. Your charity might have been well applied; but the consistency of your character was strictly preserved, and you refused me.

“I was satisfied that it was Giles who first opened your eyes to my conduct, and I never forgave him. You might, indeed, have heard a similar account from every one of your servants; but your blind confidence, your obstinacy, and your pride, kept them at such an immeasurable distance, that they rejoiced rather than otherwise, at the downfall which they saw was approaching.

“You are, I know, incapable of much feeling; but you will, nevertheless, blame your hastiness, when you are told, on the word of a dying man, that Giles was, in every respect, completely innocent. His accuser, who is the brother of Peters, by the same means in which he effected the dis-

covery, deposited the articles which Giles was suspected to have stolen, in the box of the latter. In a similar manner he purloined the goods which were sent to the aunt's in London. The direction, which gave the appearance of truth to the whole affair, was cut off from a letter which Giles had given to the younger Peters, for the purpose of having it conveyed to the post-office. The letter contained a small remittance, which supplied us with the means of procuring the necessary implements to put our design into execution. With the subsequent business you are already informed.

“How Giles became acquainted with our intentions, so as to frustrate them so completely, I know not, neither do I care. I saw him once since his dismissal, when I was lurking about the park, in company with Peters. It struck me that he recognized us, in despite of the rags, which formed our

only covering. If he did, his conduct can be readily accounted for.

“ Farewell. Life without the means of subsistence is insupportable. I am only now parting with what I every day dreaded to lose by starvation, and I die with the satisfaction, that I shall be safely removed beyond the reach of your vengeance.”

Contrary to my former maxims, I believe that if I could have seen Giles at the moment, when my conscience was reproaching me for the injustice I had committed towards him, I should have endeavoured to have made him some amends for his unmerited sufferings. But as he had taken his departure before I was undeceived, the secret monitor got less and less troublesome, and I was even cruel enough to suffer the unhappy mother to continue in an error, rather than own myself to have been imposed upon.

Peters and his brother were tried at the ensuing assizes, and being found guilty, upon the clearest evidence, were executed. They severally requested to have a personal interview with me; but I had heard enough. I was, in fact, too thoroughly sick of my own folly to listen to any thing upon the subject.

CHAP. IX.*A WINTER'S TALE.*

THE life of a person who has been placed by fortune in a situation where active pursuits, if followed at all, are the consequences of choice, and not of necessity ; and who, in the disposal of his time, has no other guide than the dictates of his own fancy, presents but little variety. Ambition may make a favourite of fortune desirous of power ; and the history of such a man may become interwoven with the events of his country. Still, however, the part which he plays has more in it of a

public than of a private nature. The statesman, out of his routine of office, varies but little from such of his contemporaries as inclination or circumstances have placed in a more quiet sphere of action; and on the relation of occurrences which are strictly of a personal description, the resemblance between them is much greater than is commonly imagined. I do not mean to infer that the hours of privacy are, in *all* ministerial cases, whatever they may be in some of those cases, spent in a manner equally frivolous with the hours of the decided idler by profession; but I am certain, that the world at large would derive no more good from the relation of what passes with the one, than what happens to the other.

Of what importance can it possibly be, either to the present race, or to succeeding generations, at what specific hours fashion had ordained

that the several occupations of a life of nothingness should be performed. Whether a coat be distended with buckram, with the *packet*, as my Lord Foppington calls it, at the calf of the leg, or whether it be suffered to descend downwards by its own natural gravity. By the bye, when we consider what our soldiers have done since they have totally lost their skirts, it appears wonderful how the victories of Marlborough were atchieved, encumbered as were his men with such a load of unnecessary trappings. At all events, it upholds my argument, that external arrangements can effect little alteration in the internal man. Whether the hour of dinner be at three or nine, is likewise unimportant; and it may be averred, that a celebrated duchess was not more out of the way, in inviting a late Premier to dine with her at ten, than the Premier was in urging

a prior engagement to *sup* with a reverend prelate at nine.

The difference between the man who, in the days of his youth, endeavoured to form himself upon the model of Sir Charles Grandison, and who, like his prototype, never stirred abroad but in a sedan chair, and the crop-eared puppy of the present day, who minces through St. James's Street, is too minute to be perceptible. The life of the one is as vapid and tasteless as that of the other.

If, to his other qualifications, a man adds the manners of a debauchee, he may indeed enliven his tale with exploits committed, or rather, which is most commonly the case, exploits which he is desirous of being supposed to have committed, in the hours, or under the influence of drunkenness ; or, perhaps he may favour his auditors with the relation of stratagems extraordinary

employed in the seduction of innocence. And if he soars to a higher niche in the pinnacle of fame, and wishes to be recorded as a man of intrigue, he may descant on his hair-breadth escapes from the fangs of a jealous husband, and may tell of the immensity of trouble it occasioned him to undermine the affections of the wife. In either capacity, he may glory in his deeds; but in both he is despicable, and must, sooner or later, find himself called upon to account for his crimes, if he has committed them in reality, and for his falsehoods, if he has been criminal no further than in sacrificing the character and feelings of others to empty boastings.

He who acts from the impulse of the moment, has some excuse to allege for his follies, and even for his vices. If nature has formed him with a temperament sanguine and occasionally beyond the powers of control, many al-

lowances can be made for acts which his better judgment, the result of sober reflection, would condemn. But his recital of them is not to be pardoned. It adds premeditation of crime to culpability. For myself, I have never laid claims to peculiar sanctity; but it ill becomes the hand of age to trace the levities of youth. The recollection of many things, which in the early part of life excited pleasurable sensations, in the vale of years can raise no feeling but that of disgust.

With these impressions operating with full force upon my mind, the reader will not be surprized on finding a considerable *hiatus* in my narrative. Perhaps he is in some measure prepared for it by the title of my work, which unquestionably allows me to make what omissions I may think proper. Two persons may certainly pursue the same method of telling a story, without subjecting either to the

imputation of plagiarism. If Shakespeare had not sunk the interval between the birth and maturity of Perdita; I should, most infallibly, have passed over nearly the same portion of time in relating the occurrences which happened in my own family. But, notwithstanding the writings of our immortal bard are in the hands of every one, and are most mercilessly mangled when they can be made of the least service, I have another ground on which I can call for acquittal—to copy Shakespeare is to copy nature. A logician may probably chuse to extend the argument *vice versa*. In that case the charge may surely be dismissed.

In the course of my narrative, I have mentioned two events, which, although they excited but little interest at the time they took place, and for a very considerable while after, were fated to furnish me with employment during

several subsequent years of my life. The events I allude to, were the birth of a son and daughter.

Their infancy was passed in the nursery of Erpingham Hall, and their childhood, during the residence there of Lady Erpingham, in the school-room of the same. When the mother was absent they ranged the house and park at pleasure, her ladyship's departure being the signal for the children to throw off the control of those to whose care they were entrusted. They never were permitted to see any of the personages whom the countess invited to her mansion, nor were they seen by any but their own immediate attendants. Lady Erpingham usually, I believe, required their presence in her dressing-room, once at least in the course of a year, but that I apprehended was merely for form's sake. Beyond that, I do not imagine she ever

enquired after them, or even thought of them, unless they were forced upon her attention.

It may appear remarkable, satisfied as I must naturally have been of the bad consequences which must inevitably have resulted from a course of education similar to that which had been adopted in my own case, that I should suffer the same prejudicial system to be pursued with my son. But I fear the charge of negligence will lay as heavily on me as on Lady Erpingham. Before my son had passed his sixteenth year, and his sister her fifteenth, I had only seen them four times, and even those four times were before the eldest was three years old. For thirteen years, therefore, I had left them to their fate, to scramble on as they could. The boy was consigned to a tutor as soon as he left the nursery, and the girl, in like manner, was placed under the superintendence

of a governess. The recommendation of both the preceptor and preceptress, in the eyes of Lady Erpingham, was their having filled similar situations in families of great antiquity. This was, indeed, their only recommendation, as Mr. Croucher's former charge had turned out one of the greatest num-skuls in the creation, and as Miss Twaddler's last pupil had been detected in an intrigue with the under butler.

Lady Erpingham was, however, perfectly satisfied with the advancement of her offspring, so long as she neither heard complaints either from them, or from their instructors against them. Indeed I will do her the justice to say, that even complaints did not make any great impression to the prejudice of the party complained of; it being her invariable practice to dismiss the complainant with severe indications of her displeasure, and with a solemn

warning to avoid a repetition of the offence. The consequences were such as might have been naturally expected. The quartetto entered into tacit articles of agreement, that neither should, on any account, or in any way, molest either of the others. Mr. Croucher and Miss Twaddler, I imagine, sought for comfort in each other, while the Lord Viscount Winterbourne was permitted to follow his inclinations in making companions of the stable boys, and Lady Caroline Monkton was encouraged to romp with the housemaids and footmen. When the Countess was in sight, or within hearing, in all cases excepted, for on those occasions a sense of self-interest induced all the four to be a little careful of their behaviour.

But the opinion of the world was every thing to Lady Erpingham. Before I go any further, however, I think some explanation may be necessary to

qualify the last expression, and to reconcile it with some former remarks, which at first sight may appear to be at variance with it. Now although Lady Erpingham had scarcely an idea beyond a pedigree, or any motive of action independent of empty state, and was, moreover, regardless of the opinion of what is commonly called the world, yet there were points and maxims which have been adhered to by persons of family, with an inflexibility, unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and to which Lady Erpingham, of necessity, conformed. Every person who applies the term world in the sense which I now use it, means, I apprehend, to include all those whose good opinion he is desirous of cultivating, without looking out of his immediate sphere of action, and without comprehending such of the remaining parts of mankind, as are situated too high, too low,

or at too great a distance to bias the particular mode of behaviour adapted to his station. Thus, the world of a chimney-sweeper is limited to the dealers in soot; and the world of Lady Erpingham was confined to families of equal antiquity with her own.

As it had been the custom, therefore, in all old families, to give the female branches an opportunity of being sought in marriage; and as Lady Erpingham prided herself upon her propriety of conduct, or in other words, as the "opinion of the world was every thing to her," the world, that is, in her case, all persons of family, would have cried out shame, if, when her daughter had reached the prescribed age, her public introduction into life had been delayed.

Soon after Lady Caroline had passed her fifteenth year, she was summoned to London; and as her brother was

still older, it was judged expedient that he should accompany her. They had been in town a full week, and had been exhibited, in all directions, before I even knew of their arrival. The intelligence was conveyed to me by the congratulations of an acquaintance, who felicitated me on being father to so accomplished and beautiful a young woman as Lady Caroline Monkton, and to so promising a youth as Lord Winterbourne.

I made my acknowledgments for the compliment which was paid to me through the medium of my family; but as I was ignorant of the means by which my friend had obtained his information, I shaped my reply as well as I could, to gain a further knowledge, without betraying my ignorance. I was successful; my friend enumerated all the places in which they had been visible. I must say, that I thought it would not have been amiss to have

consulted me, or at least to have given me to understand what the intentions were. But as I had no power to help myself, I made the best of my situation.

CHAP. X.

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

I HAD now arrived at a period of life when rest becomes desirable. My constitution had been much injured by a course of what is termed "free living," and I began to feel symptoms of premature old age. My excesses of late years had indeed been more calculated to injure my health than my purse, for I had managed to live within the income of that part of my property which I could still call my own. It was not possible for me to have entertained a direct hatred towards Lady

Erpingham, for I had never loved her. She was decidedly unpleasant to me, but she was still the mother of my children, and judging from experience I felt the immense importance of a father's sanction on their entrance into the world.

Under these impressions as soon as I had digested the information I had just received of my son and daughter being with their mother, I wrote to Lady Erpingham, to suggest to her the propriety, for the sake of the children's future welfare in life, of our appearing openly to the world as man and wife. I positively disclaimed all idea of interfering with the routine to which she had invariably accustomed herself, but I ventured to submit to her consideration, whether a daughter's establishment in marriage would not be likely to be more effectually and more advantageously secured under a father's eye, and also whether a father's autho-

rity might not conduce to the prevention of many irregularities on the part of a son, whose rank in life and future prospects would put him above the control of every other person. I concluded with requesting an early attention to the subject on the part of Ladyship, and with assurances of unaltered and unalterable esteem and regard. The last part of the letter was, it is true, mere matter of compliment but I recollect that in the middle of the sentence something rose in my throat which almost choked me.

The ensuing day I was favoured with the following note in reply,

“ Miss Toadeater has received the commands of the Right Honourable the Countess of Erpingham, &c. &c. to present the compliments of Ladyship to the Right Honourable Earl of Erpingham, &c. &c. Your Lordship's note of yesterday was delivered before her Ladyship, and by

Ladyship's direction has been transmitted, together with her Ladyship's, instructions, to Mr. Frill, of —— street, her Ladyship's solicitor, with whom the Earl of Erpingham will please to communicate upon the subject. Miss Toadeater requests the Earl of Erpingham to accept the assurances of her high consideration."

I perused this delectable note again and again. As it was the first written communication I had ever received from her Ladyship, either by deputy or otherwise, I could not, by comparing it with any former productions from the same quarter, ascertain in what frame of mind her Ladyship happened to be when she directed the pen of her secretary. But it was the Countess of Erpingham with whom I had to deal, and that ought to have lessened any surprize I might have felt, if not dissipated surprize altogether.

But having once brought myself to

consider the superintendence of my children as a duty incumbent upon me. I was resolved not to permit their future well-being to be sacrificed to idleness or punctilio, particularly as I was by no means anxious to engage in any personal intercourse with Lady Erpingham, further than was absolutely necessary to carry into effect the ends which I had in view. I did, indeed, think that Mr. Frill might almost as well have been the bearer of her Ladyship's will and pleasure, and thus have saved me the trouble of seeking him. I soon found, however, that Mr. Frill the solicitor not only to Lady Erpingham, but to several other persons of distinction, was a personage of far greater consequence than the Earl of Erpingham.

Anxious to lose no time, on the receipt of Miss Toadeater's epistle I walked to Mr. Frill's office, and was ushered to a seat in the room allotted

to the clerks. I sent in my name, which I had previously flattered myself was sufficient to procure me instant admission, or at least a removal to a more agreeable place. But my vanity was destined to experience a rebuke; the clerk, after waiting several minutes, returned to me as the bearer of Mr. Frill's compliments.—Mr. Frill was at that time most particularly engaged on an affair of immense importance, but if I would have the goodness to wait, he hoped to be at leisure in about a couple of hours, or he would attend *at his office* to any appointment I would please to make for the following day.

Thus two days of the negociation passed away, and I had made no further progress than in receiving by deputy the compliments of an attorney and of my own wife. They who are of a superstitious turn, and apt to be affected by omens, would have augured ill from so unpropitious a commence-

ment and I think it must be allowed that I gave the most indubitable proofs of my courage and perseverance, that I did not instantly desist from any further attempt.

Not willing to run the risk of a second fruitless errand I chose the hour of one on the succeeding day. For almost the first time in my life, I was punctual. St. George's church clock struck as I applied my hand to the office bell. I was admitted into the same dirty office, and after waiting a full half hour was ushered into the august presence of Mr. Frill himself. As I entered the room Mr. Frill was just taking leave of a young man, who closed a familiar discourse with "Well, Frilly, I'm off," and then assuming a theatrical tone and corresponding attitude, exclaimed "remember twelve!"

Mr. Frill apologized for having detained me so long, protesting that nothing but business of a most indispen-

able nature could have made him an unwilling trespasser upon my good-nature. But he was ever in a hurry, and really he was so torn to pieces that he had not a moment's time which he could call his own.

“How I envy the man of independence, my Lord,” continued the man of law. “How delightful to be enabled to follow pursuits which are congenial to one's inclination! But a public man must be the slave to the public. I have received within these two hours, my Lord, no less than ten letters desiring appointments. Indeed being concerned for some of the first nobility, I have been under the necessity of declining all connexion with commoners, and I can assure you, my lord, that I am compelled to refuse having any personal intercourse with such as are not titled. The Duchess Dowager of Dolittle, the Duke of Hammersmith, and the Marquis of Twaddleham have been

worrying me to death this morning respecting the claims of the Earl of Wapping upon the Pentweazle property which is at present enjoyed by the Dowager, the Dutchess of Hammer-smith, and the Marchioness of Twad-dleham, as co-heiresses of the late Sir Jeffrey Dunstan, by whom the property was claimed in right of his great grandmother. I have but little time to devote to your Lordship, as I expect the Marquis of Crump at two to consult upon the marriage articles between Lord Jeremiah Dumpy, his Lordship's second son, and Lady Keziah Gander-pool. At three I must be with Lord Viscount Badger, who is obliged to take up another twenty thousand from Jew Issachar upon annuity. This is totally against my custom, for with my extensive business, I can only see my clients here unless as a friend, but Badger is laid up with the gout and has sent me word, that if I do not come, his

disorder will certainly fly to his stomach. You see, my Lord, a lawyer of reputation is sometimes better than a doctor. Your Lordship was of course at Lady Hedgehog's masquerade last night. But it would be insulting, to a man of your Lordship's taste to suppose that you could be absent from such a superb *spectacle*.—Prodigious company.—The Dutchess of Limberham whispered in my ear that Lord Simon Horsemagog was the best mask she had ever seen. The Dutchess is a sweet woman.—The Duke will certainly carry the county of ——— at the next general election. But let us proceed to business.—Oh! here is your Lordship's letter to Lady Erpingham.—Lady Caroline Monkton is a charming creature; the picture of her lovely mother.—You have been a happy man, my Lord. Left so early at your own disposal with such an immense property. Regret that in your difficulties, a few years back, I had not

the honour of being your adviser.—
Hope soon to have the pleasure of drawing Lady Caroline's marriage articles and of attending her nuptials.—Several promising young noblemen at present in the market. What does your Lordship think of the Marquis of Puddington? to be sure he is a little warped, and his legs a little affected by bad nursing; but he is a sensible clever young man, great genius, exquisite taste, and immense fortune.—The Countess of Paperskull told me——”

How much further this harangue would have proceeded, I cannot determine, but it was interrupted by a clerk, who whispered in Mr. Frill's ear, and immediately departed.

Mr. Frill intreated my pardon for a few seconds, and followed his clerk, assuring me as he went out that it was one of his greatest misfortunes to be continually exposed to interruption.

With Mr. Frill's predecessor in bu-

siness I never had any particular reason to be dissatisfied. He had, indeed, drawn the marriage settlements between Lady Erpingham and myself, by which I was rendered such a complete cypher in every thing which related to my domestic arrangements. But I had no right to grumble; the fault was my own in submitting to such terms, and I could have no one to reproach but myself.

At the time I waited upon Mr. Frill, his former master Mr. Gangrene had been dead about eighteen months. His business and clients had been transferred by his executors soon after his disease to Mr. Frill, who was the son and heir of a Leeds tailor, for a valuable consideration. Mr. Frill had taken possession of Mr. Gangrene's house, and in so doing had insured the connections. It is in this manner that those who style themselves inde-

pendent are transferred from hand to hand like cattle in Smithfield.

I never had any vast opinion of legal advisers, notwithstanding the trust I formerly reposed in Mr. Nalder, but the folly of placing a dependance upon them never struck me so forcibly as upon the present occasion. Lady Erpingham was, however, a lover of regularity, if she could be said to be a lover of any thing. She had been in the habits of consulting Mr. Gangrene, and did not think it possible that her interest could be properly attended to, in any other house than in the one in which he had resided. In this she was by no means singular, for I have occasionally met with persons, in other respects, by no means deficient in sense, who, I am certain, would have considered themselves irretrievably ruined, if they had entrusted their affairs into any other chambers than those occupied from time to time by

the lawyers consulted by their forefathers.

Mr. Frill returned in about a quarter of an hour. He was profuse in his excuses, but his time must be devoted to his clients. Pulling out his watch, he regretted his inability to give me any more of his attention at present. If I would favour him with my company at breakfast to-morrow, he should be happy further to discuss the business in question, satisfied that every thing would be settled to our mutual satisfaction.

I regarded the puppy for some moments with astonishment, in doubt whether impudence, ignorance, or folly, most predominated. At the same time I grasped my cane, feeling an impulse almost irresistible to apply it where I thought it might be of some service. But my prudence in this instance got the better of my passion, and I was content with casting upon him a look

of ineffable contempt. Without deigning to open my lips, I haughtily passed by him, and made my way to street door.

CHAP. XI.***A FAMILY PARTY.***

I HAD seen quite sufficient of Mr. Frill to avoid degrading myself by seeking a second interview, and I verily believe, that to have saved my children, and even my wife into the bargain, from drowning, I should not have been induced to have exchanged another word with him. But as what had passed did not serve to weaken the purpose I had in view, I made up my mind to see Lady Erpingham herself, resolving, if my object could not be accomplished without the interven-

tion of a third person, to give the matter up as lost, and to retreat in the quietest way, and with the best grace possible.

In this frame of mind, I proceeded directly to the house which I intended once more to call my own. The old porter was dead, and his successor being entirely unacquainted with my person, I was under the necessity of announcing myself before I was even permitted to gain a footing in the hall. When he heard my name he appeared by his looks to doubt the correctness of my assertion. Perhaps, he had never heard of such a person, as the husband of his lady. But after waiting a few moments, during which the porter was pondering upon the course to be adopted, I was conducted into an anti-room, where in a short time I was greeted by a lady, who was announced to me as Miss Toadeater.

The laws of politeness were never

more rigidly adhered to in China itself, than in this interview. Every article in every title which the code of ceremony contained, was gone through, before it was permitted me to enter upon the business which had brought me to the house.

I requested to have the honour of seeing Lady Erpingham. Miss Toadeater gave me to understand that her Ladyship's hour of receiving visitors had not yet arrived. I ventured to allege that my business was of a nature that would not brook delay. Her Ladyship was on the point of entering her carriage, for her morning's ride, but upon my earnest solicitation Miss Toadeater, said she would, in this instance, infringe upon her Ladyship's commands, and inform her Ladyship of my visit.

Her Ladyship at last burst upon me in all her state and dignity, most gorgeously equipped for her morning's

airing. She made me a low curtesy with,

“ My Lord !”

“ My Lady !”

As I spoke I made a bow corresponding in profundity to her Ladyship's curtesy. Before I could gain the erect position, her Ladyship took up the discourse. .

“ I hardly know, my Lord, *exactly* to what circumstance I am indebted for the honour of this visit. Mr. Frill has not as yet made any report on _____”

“ No, my Lady, nor ever will. At least it is very unlikely that he should make any report to the purpose. Your Ladyship must excuse me, but really this is a case in which no third person can have a right to interfere. It is a matter entirely between ourselves, and the only point to be settled is, whether our children are to be put forward.

in the world in a way becoming their situation in life, or not.

Her ladyship heard me with silent attention, but without any expression of countenance which indicated either doubt or conviction. But she vouchsafed no reply. Looking at her watch, she observed that her time was expired. She would, however, dispense with the attendance of Miss Toadeater, who was perfectly acquainted with her sentiments.

We parted as we met, with all the marks of outward respect.

I had already stormed the breach. To take the town, I apprehended would be easy. The citadel would then surrender at discretion. Miss Toadeater, indeed, seemed to consider herself entitled by the post she held, to throw every obstacle in the way of the negotiation, for instead of endeavouring to conciliate, she thought proper to entertain me with a long ha-

range upon the angelic virtues of a wife, accompanied by indirect hints of qualities of an opposite description by which, she was pleased to infer, had been distinguished.

As if conscious of the truth of Mr Toadeater's allegations, I behaved myself with such becoming moderation as to draw from her an acknowledgment of hopes, that she had been misinformed and mistaken. The conference was brought to a close in the course of about half an hour, and the following articles were agreed to by Mr Toadeater and myself, subject, however, to the approbation of her Ladyship, which the companion had no doubt of obtaining.

I was to have free egress and ingress at all times, and seasons through the street door. The uninterrupted use of all the staircases and passages in the house. Access to the nursery and school room between the hours

eight in the morning, and eight in the evening. (As to this article, by the bye, I was a little at a loss, but as it was proposed by Miss Toadeater, I passed it without remark.) My library and the study adjoining, were to be delivered up to me in absolute fee simple, and I was graciously permitted to enter the breakfast, dinner, and supper rooms at meal times, as also, the ball, card and concert rooms, when properly arranged for the reception of company. It was further agreed that the domestics severally belonging to the contracting parties, should be kept separate and distinct; her Ladyship in all cases reserving to herself the right of dismissing such of my servants, as were rash enough to offend against the rules and regulations of the household.

To these articles I could start no reasonable objection, and I believe, I should have agreed to any proposi-

tion whatever, an obligation to a personal intercourse with Lady Erpingham excepted.

The ratification of the treaty by the Ladyship was forwarded to the house in the evening, and the following day I again took possession of my own house. As soon as I had seated myself in the study, and felt the consciousness that I was at home, I gave directions that the children should be summoned. I saw a tall gawky looking girl, and an empty looking young man who were introduced to me as my son and daughter. To have judged from their countenances, their minds were as unformed as their persons. I could not deny their claims of affiliation, and therefore, received them with the best grace possible, hoping that time and attention would render them as well like the rest of world.

When the hour of dinner arrived

and I found myself again seated at the bottom of the table, I was half inclined to fancy that I was sixteen years younger. I could perceive little or no alteration in the person of Lady Erpingham, and not the smallest difference in her manner. She was equally stiff, and ceremonious as pending the honey moon. During the repast, silent gravity usurped the place of conversation. Had it been a dinner of crowned heads, it could not have been more thoroughly stupid. The servants were ranged respectively behind their Lord and Lady, as if they had been drawn up for battle array, and wanting but the signal to engage in combat. An ideal line was drawn across the table and room, below which her Ladyship's domestics never descended, and above which, mine never ventured to advance.

I had now ample opportunity to lament the neglected education of the

children. Their actions, and the few words they uttered, betrayed the grossest vulgarity. Their behaviour even attracted the notice, and roused the indignation of Lady Erpingham, and she actually reproved Caroline for putting her knife to her mouth. "Toadeater," said her Ladyship, "instruct that creature, as to her behaviour in future, and do not let me be again witness to such outrages upon decency." The boy was still worse, for when his mother's eyes were not directed towards him, he amused himself with significant nods and winks at one of the footmen.

Lady Erpingham had always expressed a dislike to dinner company. She soon left the room with her companion desiring Caroline to follow them. I was, therefore, soon released from this state of purgatory. I gladly retired to my library with my son, anxious to find something that would

encourage my hopes of improvement, but I confess that my fears predominated.

The youth did not appear by any means so really deficient in intellect, as I expected, but he had still more of cunning than sense about him. His tutor, as I have before observed, had no sort of influence over the mind or actions of his pupil, and as the latter could seldom be prevailed upon to study, he was left to pursue his own inclinations, which led him to seek the society of the groom and the game-keeper. If shooting had been the test of perfection, Charles would have been all accomplished, and however awkward he appeared at his father's table, he was perfectly at home in the stable, and in the dog kennel.

From the little I had seen of Caroline, I was satisfied that she possessed more pliability of temper, and more versatility of talent. Her improve-

ment was rapid, both in person and accomplishments. She appeared to be seized with the spirit of emulation and to have been roused by her pride at the discovery of her own deficiencies, when compared to the attainments, real or pretended, of the young females with whom she associated. In a few weeks I hardly knew her to be the same person, and I declare myself to have felt a degree of pleasure which I had been long a stranger to, seeing her rapidly approaching towards becoming a handsome woman. She applied herself indefatigably to her studies, and having the assistance of the most eminent masters in the various branches of female education, promised to make up for lost time. Lady Erpingham viewed her progress in knowledge with the same cool inference, that she noticed her ignorance, and had it not been for frequent encouragement on my part, per-

Caroline, I believe would soon have relaxed in her exertions.

The ignorance of Charles was for a time a complete bar to his progress. Unlike his sister, he appeared devoid of emulation. He was now at a time of life when mingling with others is desirable. But to what public seminary could I send him, where he could find associates of his own rank? To have placed him, where his deficiencies would have degraded him to a level with the youngest boys, would have been the sure means of exposing him to insult, and breaking his spirit. On the other hand, while he remained at home it seemed next to impossible to wean him from his low propensities.

My only hope at present was in exciting his pride for dress. It in great measure succeeded. By the assistance of a French valet, he became an odd mixture of a *petit maitre* and a

postilion. But this only mended his exterior. The interior continued in the same empty state, and appeared to bid defiance to the entrance of all instruction.

I sought for a well disposed youth to place about him as a companion, expecting to work upon his mind by the force of example. But the innate superiority of the young man I had selected, only rendered the defects of Charles more visible, from the contrast which was exhibited. Charles, however, was aware of the striking difference, and as he declined to use his endeavours for placing himself upon a level with his companion, he gave way to a mean jealousy. Aversion, as might naturally be expected in such a case, speedily ensued. This broke out in ungovernable paroxysms of rage; so much so, that the poor youth was reluctantly obliged to forego the prospects which his situation

in a family of importance held out to him, and which he had contemplated with the highest delight. I promised indeed to provide for him in another way, but according to my invariable custom, I entirely forgot him.

After much deliberation, I at last placed Charles under the superintendence of a gentleman, who had been extremely successful in his treatment of a similar case. The good effects of Mr. Gordon's mild and persuasive manner was soon evident, and if there was no positive promise of Charles becoming the man of sense, there was, at least, some probability of his preserving the exterior of a gentleman. If he was not likely to be a striking ornament to his family, a hope might be reasonably entertained that he would not be a disgrace to it. This was as much, under all circumstances, as could be expected.

His love of low company, indeed,

baffled the exertions of Mr. Gordon in many points, and could never be thoroughly eradicated. To this vice he added another, of a nature equally to be regretted, because the possessor of it will always be a prey to others; it consisted in doing any thing even in opposition to his own judgment, if he was dared to the attempt. If a horse was particularly vicious, Charles would ride him. His neck was perpetually in jeopardy and he appeared to verify the old adage "that fools and madmen are never in danger."

Such was to be my successor, and I do not think, with all my folly that with the appearance which he presented, my memory would have materially suffered by the comparison.

CHAP. XII.***A DEBUT.***

IT would be a fortunate circumstance for parents, if their duty to their children ceased when education is considered to be complete. But unhappily the commencement of maturity is, of all others, the period at which most circumspection is necessary. The desire of reaching the moment, when restraint shall cease, is imbibed from earliest infancy, and as that moment usually arrives when the current of the blood flows with the greatest rapidity, too much caution cannot

be employed in restraining impetuosity, and in directing the passions in the path which should not be inimical to future happiness. I ~~had~~ myself suffered so much from the neglect of my father in this respect, that I was determined neither of my children should have to load my memory with similar reproaches. I resolved to promote their welfare, in the best way I was able, comforting myself, that if I failed in the attempt, I should at least have the satisfaction of having performed my duty.

When I refer to my daughter's welfare in the world, I am far from being desirous of assuming a merit which I do not possess. I confess that the happiness of Lady Caroline Monkton formed but a very trifling part of my scheme. My sole object was to see her well-married in the common acceptance of the phrase. To accomplish this the path was straight for-

ward, although the success might be doubtful. Lady Caroline had to be shown in the fashionable circles. The result was to be left to chance. Females, being deemed marriagable at an earlier age than men, Charles was at present no obstacle to my giving my undivided attention to the advancement of his sister.

The public introduction of a young female of rank, which of course comprehends fashion, is, to her, an era of the utmost importance. It is necessary that she should be set before the world with splendour becoming the dignity of her station. As I had no fortune to bestow upon my daughter, independent of what I was empowered, under former settlements, to burthen the estates as a provision for younger children, nobility, and a person by no means disagreeable, must have been Caroline's chief attractions. Marriages in high life, I knew by experience, had

nothing to do with affection. To prevent his doing worse, the heir is usually tied for life, by the management of his parents, before he is properly out of his leading strings. In cases where fortune is already sufficient, family is considered as of the first importance and what blood in the country was more noble than that which was formed by the junction of the ancient houses of Vavasour and Erpingham? Caroline's pretensions were here undoubted; Cadwallader himself was not better descended. No young female, therefore of equal expectations in point of property, ever entered the world under more favourable auspices.

During the season of Caroline's *debut*, our mansion exhibited a scene of gaiety unparalleled. Lady Erpingham thought proper to present her daughter at court, but having done that, she considered herself as exempt from any further trouble. The pre

sentation, however, was the signal for noise and bustle. It was no sooner past than the house was turned upside down. My library was stripped of its natural ornaments for the purpose of providing an extra supper-room. The bookcases and books were huddled together in a garret; but as far as book-cases and books were concerned, I was passive. They were as much use to me in one place as in another, but I stoutly maintained my post in defence of my study, which was proposed to be thrown into the dining-room. When this inroad upon my comforts and independence was first mentioned, I was even ruffled by Miss Toadeater herself, amiable as were her general manners.

Notwithstanding all this bustle and confusion, Lady Erpingham would on no account suffer herself to be put out of the way. At her regular time of admitting visitors, she condescended

to receive the homage of the company with which the house was crowded from morning till night. She retired at her usual time, without betraying symptoms either of displeasure or satisfaction. It seemed a matter of the completest indifference to her, whether her daughter was married or not ; and I sometimes doubted whether she recollected that she had a daughter at all.

But although Lady Erpingham did not think proper to take the post of honour upon this occasion, the consequence of the family was sustained to perfection by the Dowager Countess of Littleworth, a distant relation of Lady Erpingham. At an intimation from the latter, conveyed through the medium of Miss Toadeater, the Dowager was readily prevailed upon to occupy the places of directress-general of the revels, and *chaperone* to Carline, both of which she filled in

manner which met her own approbation, though I am not equally certain that every body else was of the same opinion.

As I may never have so fair an opportunity of expatiating upon the vast merits of Lady Littleworth, I should consider myself blameable if I passed it by. Nature had been extremely niggardly in furnishing the inside of her ladyship's head ; and Fortune, doubtless, on account of her being blind, had been equally niggardly in supplying her ladyship's pocket. But these deficiencies were amply compensated by a most unbounded stock of pride and presumption. Her ladyship was wholly dependant upon a small jointure, upon which, by practising the most rigid economy, she contrived to make both ends meet. Her whole soul was continually absorbed in schemes to make the most splendid

appearance possible. Without allowing herself the use of wine, or of plate, she kept a butler, a domestic of that denomination being indispensable to all who pretend to rank and fashion. The remainder of her ladyship's establishment consisted of a coachman, two footmen, a house-maid, and her own woman; all but the latter were on board wages. For a cook there could be no occasion, where no eatables were required to be drest. The spare diet allowed to herself and her attendant, was invariably cooked by the latter, under her ladyship's own immediate inspection, and in her dressing-room, to prevent the possibility of waste. After the frugal pair had taken their meal, the scraps of meat were regularly weighed before they were dispatched to the larder, and as regularly re-weighed on their appearance for their next meal. Lady Little-

worth prided herself in having a set of the most honest servants in London!!

It was therefore no matter of surprise, that stinted as her ladyship was at home, in even the necessities of life, she should revel with an insatiable appetite in the fat pastures of Erpingham House. She appeared determined to make amends for past privations. The parties at our mansion were crowded to excess; for who could possibly resist ripe peaches and green peas in February?

It was a fortunate circumstance that the establishment, as settled by Lady Erpingham at the *happy* period of our marriage, included a *maitre d'hotel* as well as a house-steward; I might otherwise have been overwhelmed with trouble in the payment of bills. As it was, I had only to transfer over a few thousands at a time, just as they were wanted. The distribution to the va-

rious claimants was performed by the steward with a rapidity truly wonderful.

The presentation served as a prelude to Lady Caroline's fame as a first-rate beauty. In the paragraphs which daily adorned the columns of the fashionable world, fortune was wisely omitted; and I really began to think, from the flattering encomiums which were given in that mirror of fashionable life, that my daughter really had wherewithal to lift her above the common croud. I continued in this error about three months, when in casting my eyes over a page in the house-steward's accounts, I perceived the several sums of three guineas, two guineas and a half, and two guineas, placed against the word "Newspapers." I asked the steward if he supposed me mad enough to pass his accounts with such a gross evidence of fraud upon the face of them.

The man requested an explanation. I pointed to the items, observing at the same time, that I thought the three newspapers which were laid constantly upon my breakfast table, were quite sufficient for the whole family ; and further, that if the charge were correct, which I could hardly believe, I would on no account submit to such abominable extravagance.

While I was talking, I turned over other leaves, and was completely thunderstruck at finding two or three entries of a similar description in every one of them.

Convinced that I was cheated, my next object was to bring the proof home to the house-steward. With that view, I dismissed him without any further remark, determining to proceed instantly to the office of the fashionable world, in order to procure the damning evidences of dishonesty. The spirit of vengeance was roused

within me, and I resolved to punish the crime in so exemplary a manner, as to be a warning to all house-stewards, down to the latest generation.

In my way to the Strand, I had contrived to work myself gradually into a degree of nervous excitability, which had about reached its height as I was ushered into the presence of the conductor of the paper. To use the expression of a statesman more eminent for sound than for sense, and more remarkable for impudence than either, my temper, "was in a state far from satisfactory." We both of us alluded to internal rebellion. His rebellion, however, was in the heart of the kingdom, whereas mine was only caused by an insurrection of the "black choler," which was fomented, and was on the point of breaking forth, in defiance of reason, prudence, and justice.

Forgetting that my errand was only to satisfy myself of the dishonesty of

my steward, I began, without ceremony, a virulent attack upon the conductor of the paper, whom I broadly charged with abominable extortion.

Mr. Buckler very wisely suffered me to vent my rage without giving me the slightest interruption. When I had a little cooled, of my own accord, he quietly asked if I had not mistaken him for some other person, as he had not the honour of being acquainted with me.

I immediately saw my error, not only for giving way to my temper, but for not making myself personally known. On my signifying to him that he was speaking to the Earl of Erpingham, he made a most profound bow, saying as he rose up, that it would be to him a matter of the deepest regret, if anything had been done which had given offence to so great a supporter of the publication, in which he had the felicity of being concerned.

Not being aware that my patronage had ever extended so far, I looked with astonishment at a person who could utter such a barefaced lie to my face. But the conversation was by no means at a stand still for want of words 'on my part, for Mr. Buckler continued his speech.

“ I hope your lordship will do me the honour to credit my assertion, when I assure you, that from the commencement of the agreement which was made on the part of your lordship, by the Dowager Countess of Littleworth, we have invariably charged less for the paragraphs referring to Lady Caroline Monkton, by half-a-guinea each paragraph, than is our usual custom. The proofs which this book will afford you if your Lordship will have the goodness to examine the different items, and compare them with the space in the paper which each occupies, will convince

you that I am utterly incapable of deceiving your Lordship.

He put the paper of that day in my hand, and as I read the different paragraphs, he pointed to the corresponding entry in the book. I was a good deal amused at finding that my family were not the only fools in the creation ; and I certainly acquitted the proprietors of the paper of all blame for taking money, when people were silly enough to pay for the recording of the most trivial incidents, in a publication that dies with the day, and indeed scarce drags on its existence to the evening.

In the course of my labours, I pointed out a passage which spoke of the Duchess of Alnwater, and her three beautiful daughters——“ Good God !” said I, “ is it possible that the Duchess, who is a pattern of truth and propriety, should wish to be the propagator of such an abominable falshood ; for certainly her daughters are three of the

plainest, not to say the ugliest, young women in the kingdom. Pray, Sir, do you not make an extra charge on such occasions ?”

“ Oh no, my Lord, such a distinction would be impossible. Besides, where there is real beauty, there can be no necessity for puffing.”

I thought of Caroline, and gave a long interjectional whistle.

“ Pray, Sir, may I take the liberty of requesting to see the originals of the several paragraphs which have been inserted on the part of my daughter.”

“ By all means, my Lord ; those from our regular customers we keep on separate files ; for it often happens that we receive general orders for a complimentary paragraph two or three times a week, as the case may be. On referring then to the file, we are at no loss for the style best adapted to the parties. Here is your Lordship’s file. You will see every passage from, ‘ The

lovely daughter of the Earl of Erpingham, who was presented on the birthday by her charming mother, is universally allowed to be the most beautiful and accomplished female at present irradiating the luminary of fashion,' down to the entry of yesterday—' We are concerned to state, that the lovely Lady Caroline Monkton still feels some degree of pain from the accident which happened about three weeks since to her little finger.' ”

I viewed the file, and was not a little surprized to find the whole of the articles in my daughter's hand-writing; which, by the bye, was none of the most lady-like.

“ Will you allow me, Sir, to ask the price of my daughter's beauty and accomplishments in the first paragraph ? ”

“ Five guineas, my Lord ; but in this instance there was a combination of circumstances. It was not only the

first announcement of Lady Caroline, but it likewise recorded her presentation at court. The announcement and the presentation usually form distinct paragraphs, at three guineas each. But as Lady Littleworth gave us to understand that we might daily receive marks of her favor, we undertook to charge every thing at a reduced rate."

"Very moderate indeed, Sir!! but surely you do not receive at that rate for these trifling insertions of arrivals and departures?"

"By no means; they are mere matters of course. Indeed the plan adopted, in these cases, is one of economy; for an announcement in the Fashionable World being considered equivalent to visits upon arrivals and departures, and being only charged half-a-guinea, your Lordship will readily guess the immensity of saving in cards, to say nothing of the wear and tear of a footman. Were it not for the Fashionable

World, I am satisfied every family, whose acquaintance is even moderately extensive, would be under the necessity of keeping an extra male domestic."

"But here is the arrival of my friend Sir Gregory Goose, in the paper of this morning, and I see your charge is one guinea and a half?"

"True, my Lord; but then you will observe, that we pledge ourselves to Miss Goose being *charming*. For this we charge an extra guinea.

I took leave of Mr. Buckler, convinced of the extreme utility of the Fashionable World, and better pleased with my *beautiful and accomplished* daughter than I expected to be when I first made the discovery, as I plainly perceived that the newspaper praise of every other female originated from the same source.

As I walked home through Leicester

Fields, I strolled into the Panorama, where the first objects that struck my attention were, Sir Gregory Goose, Lady Goose, and the *charming* Miss Goose. I congratulated the Baronet upon his arrival in town, observing that I had seen it announced in the newspapers.

“ Dear me, my Lord, how odd!—only think, Lady Goose, they have put our coming to town in the newspaper. What pains those persons must take to ferret out all people of consequence.”

I smiled inwardly at the Baronet's remark; then taking a cursory view of the painting, I made bow to the Goose family, and wished them good morning.

As soon as I got home, I sent for Caroline, to ask her how it was possible for her to give way to such abominable vanity, as to scribble her praises with her own hand. She assured me that

she had no further concern in the business, than copying the compositions of Lady Littleworth.

I much regretted when I was at the office, that I did not enquire what had been paid for making Lady Erpingham and myself, a "*happy pair*," at the time of our marriage. If it was paid for in proportion to the magnitude of the lie; the purse must have been very long that furnished the means. I made a memorandum in my pocket-book, to ascertain the matter at some future day; but from that time to this present hour, in which I am relating the circumstance, no trace was to be found in my memory.

CHAP. XIII.

PROPOSALS.

I AM perfectly aware that in the last chapter I have advanced one part of my story considerably before the other, but this is a mode of proceeding to which every person is liable who has not accustomed himself to the arrangement of his thoughts for the purposes of composition. In book-craft as well as in priestcraft, there are many points both of major and minor consequence, which are only known to those initiated into the mysteries of their respective orders. It is for this reason that the

works of one writer shall flow in a pellucid steady current, while those of another shall have all the unsightly appearance of a stagnant pool. And yet, when the contents of both shall be thoroughly analyzed, the glittering style of the former shall be found, in point of real value, infinitely short of the solid sense of the latter.

It must not however be supposed, because I have said a word or two in favour of sense against sound, that it is my intention to praise muddle headed authors in general, and myself among the number. All I meant to infer, was the possibility that a book might be deficient in grace, elegance, order, and even perspicuity, and yet after all be tolerably decent. Writing and speaking are both of them apt to confound the judgement, by inducing us to give way to first impressions, without making a due enquiry into the proper source of gratification. It is in this way that at

breakfast I have often supposed myself delighted with a smooth easy composition of which not a single idea engrafted itself upon my memory, when in fact, I have been only pleased with the flavour of my buttered rolls. In the same manner when I have listened with delight to the finely rounded periods of Mr. Shanning,—when I have admired the tones of his voice and his graceful delivery, I have, in the language of a noble statesman, been ready to “*stand prostrate*” at his feet with delight. But when I have reluctantly seen Mr. Shanning resume his seat I have been unable to find any thing remaining of a brilliant harangue, but frothy matter seasoned with the smooth twang of empty verbosity.

To reason fairly upon the business, there is no other mode of telling a story so as to avoid one part running before the other, unless a writer proceed upon the plan of a polyglott bible, and in-

stead of applying the different columns to different languages, to use them for the relation of collateral and contemporaneous events, which sometimes intermingle and at other times have no more to do with each other than the inhabitants of the moon with those of the earth.

Having closed my affairs with the "fashionable world" it is now my duty to bring up the rest of my story to the same period. Having done that, I shall be again at liberty to take another start forward, and in due time hope to arrive at the end of my labours.

The first act of Lady Littleworth's reign was to give a most splendid ball, for which no less than twelve hundred tickets were issued. I attended to little that passed during the evening except to observe the degree of notice which my daughter excited among the marriageable unmarried part of the company. Although the ball was given

early in the month of February, and during the continuance of a severe frost; the rooms were crowded to such an excess, that with scarce a fire in any part of the mansion, every guest was in a state of thaw and dissolution. It is really astonishing to what inconveniences persons *capable* of thinking, submit from inclination. But with all the capacity for thinking, it must, I think, be quite clear, that in such cases the powers of reasoning can never be resorted to, or no one could be content for fashion sake, to breathe a pestilential air and literally to "fret in their grease."

I considered myself truly fortunate that my persevering tenacity had secured to me the refuge of my study. In flying to it early in the evening, or rather morning, I escaped from a place to which, even in Lucifer's eyes, Pandemonium would have been a paradise. By retiring I luckily escaped

any fatal consequences, but I was given to understand that numbers dated their lingering diseases to the fatal ball. The beautiful Lady Charlotte Spilsbury, who during the evening, clad like a nymph of early autumn, was the gayest of the gay, entirely lost the use of her limbs by the rapid transition from overwhelming heat to the keen cutting of the northern blast.

The grand ball was succeeded by weekly parties, and on the intervening nights the dowager and my daughter returned the visits which had been paid them. Sometimes for a week together I did not even see my daughter, for although I was repeatedly in the same houses that she frequented, chance seldom led us to the same place at the same time. A country life had given her a strong constitution, and she really bore the fatigue in the style of a veteran in dissipation.

As Lady Caroline Monkton was

now absolutely on sale, it was my duty to pay every attention to such as did me the honour of bidding for her. With that view I regularly attended every morning in my study from one o'clock till three. At first the proposals of fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts in favour of their respective relatives, as well as conditional offers from young men on their own account, were pretty numerous. Seldom a day indeed passed without my having to discuss the business at length, four or five times. But the smallness of the fortune was the bar to hungry nobility; Caroline herself, I fear, had no great charms for nobility not in want, and Lady Erpingham was a bar to commoners of every description.

Twenty thousand pounds was the utmost I could ensure to Lady Caroline. This sum I almost invariably found to fall far short of expectation. One sprig of fashion and family asked

me if I was really serious. On assuring him that I never was less inclined to joke in my life, he observed that I ought to be ashamed of myself.

“ But I’ll tell you what, my Lord,” added he, “ Lady Caroline is really passable, and I’ve an immense regard for her mother. Your family, my Lord Erpingham, and that of the Countess, one need not be ashamed of. Without a further waste of words, I’ll take Lady Caroline at eighty thousand, and rat me if I’d take any other woman under a hundred thousand.—I see that your Lordship is inclined to make advances, but I would not make Caroline Viscountess Ruinhams for one farthing less than the eighty thousand.”

I rose from my seat, saying that I was sorry that a negotiation so happily commenced should be so soon terminated.

“ Pray, my Lord, make no apologies.

I'm vastly sorry for the poor girl.—Give my love to her.—I hope the paltry twenty thousand will do something for her.—But it must be where the blood wants ennobling.”

On the next negociation I adopted a different plan. I talked of so much down and hinted largely at personal property at my death. But it would not do, for I found men of rank to be christians in nothing but in their dealings with jews. Although they permit the latter fraternity to prey upon their very vitals, in their concerns with each other they are as shrewd and as extortionate as the children of Israel. I did not altogether blame them, being satisfied at the time that further realities, not expectations, were out of the question. Expectations I held out abundance, and perhaps it was because I made them so plentiful that they were considered of such little value.

The certainty was the only point that admitted of serious discussion. I was every now and then reminded of my rank and fortune, and that my daughter was an only daughter. Lord Limber I was told gave fifteen thousand and had five daughters; at the same time his Lordship's fortune was by no means extensive. It was also observed that Lord Rington gave as much, and had no less than nine daughters. I urged the positive blood and beauty of Lady Caroline Monkton in opposition to the comparative mean birth and superlative homeliness of the Honourable Misses Cinnamon; and as a further illustration of my argument in favour of blood and beauty, I observed that although all the Misses Cinnamon had long been marriagable, and had been regularly brought forward, only one had as yet been disposed of.

All would not do. Ever day served

to diminish my hopes and to increase my fears. One reflection gave rise to another, and as the season was drawing towards a close I seriously began to grumble at the enormous expenditure, which did not seem the least likely to furnish any return, either, as the proverb says, in meal or malt. It afforded no pleasure at the time and held out no prospects for the future. But this was not the worst of it. What was spent in absolute waste would have brought Caroline's fortune up to the required maximum of the majority of suitors, although it might not have been sufficient to elevate her to the rank of Viscountess Ruinham.

My remarks on this subject have hitherto been confined to noble suitors, or such as must infallibly have become noble, in case the dissipation and debauchery of the son did not happen to be greater than the like courses on the part of the father, and, as has been of-

ten the case, sent the former to his grave loaded with all the infirmities of old age, and left the latter in the possession, not indeed of youth, but of health and vigour, with the probability of outliving his third generation.

As to commoners of *family*, I found them as lofty in their pretensions as *nobles* of family. Indeed there were two or three that had no objection to Lady Caroline on the score either of family or fortune, and who would have condescended to marry her if she would have covenanted to drop the “Lady” by courtesy. Lady Erpingham herself started no dislike to the antiquity or respectability of their families, but with her a coronet was indispensable, and unless they were possessed of that it was of no consequence whether they were descended from Noah’s first son or his third. But the parties I have alluded to as requiring a complete spoliation of all title, entertained their

species of pride as obstinately as ladyship, although it was of an ignominious nature. They would not debase themselves and their families by the acceptance of a peerage, which would place the first of commoners with the last of Lords, and consign them to the rear of tinkers, tailors, weavers and perriwig makers.

The declaration that a title would be refused was publickly made.—I wonder if it was ever proffered!

The proposition which most merited approbation was from a follower of Moses on the part of his son. He was liberal in the extreme, and completely freed from the least tincture of Judaism. Mr. Iscariot engaged that he and his son would embrace christianity,—they would not only take Lady Catherine's line without fortune, but would transfer to my own use the twenty thousand pounds which I could charge on my estates. In addition to this,

expressed a willingness, if I wanted it, of lending me fifty thousand pounds on no better security than my bond and judgment. The Iscariot family possessed souls. They even proposed to eat pork in my presence as a test of their sincerity.

CHAP. XIV.

NEGOCIATIONS.

IF the demands on account of a profuse style of living, had not fallen upon me faster than I could answer them, I do not imagine I should have regarded Mr. Iscariot, in the light of a relation with much complacency. But as his entrance into my study immediately succeeded the exit of the most importunate dun, I coupled the new Jew and the convenience together, and found the mixture not only palatable but even pleasant to the taste.

Before I ventured to hint such a

position to Lady Erpingham, I viewed it in every possible shape. In whatever position I placed it, convenience was apparent. The difficulties, however, as far as regarded her Ladyship, were apparently insurmountable. But what is the act to which necessity may not drive a man? There was something most unquestionably repulsive, in making a son-in-law out of Mr. Shadrach Iscariot. However it was become absolutely necessary that I should find some new mode of raising money, and by embracing the proposal I could obtain money for myself and a husband for my daughter by the same simple operation.

Lest I might alarm Lady Erpingham by the too abrupt introduction of a topic which at first view was likely to call up all the Vavasours from Adam downwards, in judgement against me, I determined to enter into a detail of my actual situation, hoping that her ladyship

would yield to prudence that which might be repugnant to inclination.

Through the medium of the kind Miss Toadeater I procured a private audience and a promise of serious attention. In the first place, I candidly laid before her ladyship a statement of my affairs, which I had drawn up to suit the present occasion, but which I doubt not was under the mark. By this it appeared that I was little short of fifty thousands pound in debt. Charles, I further observed, would in a very short time require an outfit adequate to his rank in life. This, I declared, would be wholly out of my power, unless some plan was adopted to free me from pressing embarrassments, principally created, as her ladyship must be well aware, by the recent introduction of Lady Caroline. I concluded by regretting that our daughter was still unprovided for, but that I was of opinion it was possible even now to

secure her an adequate establishment, before I should be under the necessity of reducing my style of living to the scale of economy which my situation demanded.

A gleam of sunshine shot across her ladyship's countenance, from which I augured a successful result. My hopes were still further increased by her ladyship declaring that she could not be averse to the adoption of any measure which was calculated to afford me the desired relief.

Emboldened by her ladyship's condescension, spirited on by my urgent wants, and after much circumlocution, chiefly upon the desirableness of Caroline being eligibly married, I came to the point. I clearly proved that the acceptance of Mr. Shadrach Iscariot would at once relieve my distresses and provide an establishment for Caroline far beyond any thing that had yet come before me in a tangible shape: I urged

the willingness of Mr. Shadrach and his father to abjure the doctrines of Moses, and explained to her ladyship the all-powerful effects of an act of parliament in wiping away all traces of jewish origin. In short, I resorted to every mood and figure of speech, with which my short acquaintance with eloquence could supply me, and stated and retated my arguments in every possible way which I thought capable of adding strength to my cause.

Lady Erpingham listened to me with the most profound attention, but with all my penetration I could not discover that any of my arguments made the least impression upon her mind. This however I will say, that if any did all did; for I could not perceive the slightest variation of feature or expression.

After I had exhausted my rhetoric I calmly looked towards her ladyship in expectation of a reply corresponding

to her former observation. But seeing that she still maintained her silence, with a voice and look which I intended should be affectionate, I most respectfully solicited the favour of her advice, which I assured her should guide me upon the present occasion.

Lady Erpingham, however, acted like herself. When I had made a full stop, she rose from her seat with more than her usual dignity, then casting upon me a look of the most sovereign contempt she stalked majestically to the door without vouchsafing a reply.

I had scarcely recovered from my surprize, at the conference having been terminated in a manner so contrary to what I had led myself to anticipate, when my daughter entered the room in search of me. She presented to me a handsome diamond necklace, which she said a jeweller had brought for her inspection, with the assurance that it would be sold a most tremendous bar-

gain. By her account, the jeweller had estimated it to be richly worth two thousand five hundred pounds to any one in the trade, but as it was the property of a person greatly in want of money, he had been empowered to dispose of it at the very low price of two thousand guineas! She concluded by expressing her admiration of its extreme beauty, and coolly asking me for a draft for the money.

My astonishment was as great in the affair of the necklace as Lady Erpingham's had been in the affair of the Jew. I looked steadfastly at Caroline for a few seconds, and then taking a lesson from her mother, I retreated in dignified silence to my own apartment.

On consideration, I was by no means sorry to perceive a strong love of finery in my daughter. I had never suspected her to be in possession of any of the nicer feelings, but till now,

I had been at a loss to discover what bias her ruling passion had taken.

Pope thinks proper to maintain that women must necessarily incline either to the “love of pleasure, or the love of sway.” Perhaps he is right. Caroline certainly evinced no love of sway, for she submitted to be led by the dowager in every thing. As to pleasure, her empire is so extensive, and her subjects of so many different nations, colours, sorts, sizes, and degrees, that it is impossible to convey a distinct idea to the mind without defining the genus and species. The anxiety, however, which my daughter showed for possessing this *trifle*, as she called it, convinced me that her notions of pleasure tended to external gratification.

Having resolved, for the best of all possible reasons, to give every encouragement to the addresses of Mr. Shadrach Iscariot, I began seriously to consider the most effectual means of

his becoming my son-in-law. The certainty that wealth and splendour awaited her, would, I conceived, reconcile Lady Caroline Monkton to the match. *Her* repugnance overcome, the path was straight forward, except, indeed, any opposition should arise on the part of Lady Littleworth. But this I treated lightly, not in the least doubting that gold administered to the dowager in sufficient doses, would not be found in the least wanting of its usual infallibility.

I did not, however, permit my intended son-in-law to remain in ignorance of this probable obstacle to our mutual wishes. Mr. Shadrach wisely suggested the idea of converting the dowager into a warm friend. He therefore empowered me to enter into a negociation with her Ladyship, and to make any offer, which I might deem fair and reasonable.

I sounded the dowager, first as to

her inclination. Her pride caught fire, and she furiously denounced the plan, accusing me of a want of pride, principle, and a sense of decency. She threatened me with the vengeance of Lady Erpingham's family, and declared that she could never survive such a degradation. She then commenced a strain of invectives against Jews in general, and the Messrs. Iscariot in particular, ending with an anathema upon the whole race.

I suffered her to expend her ammunition, and then merely mentioned that I had heard the elder Mr. Iscariot say, that it was his intention to present to such of Lady Caroline's relations and *particular* friends, as would do him the honour of accepting it, a bank note of Five Hundred Pounds, for the purchase of wedding ornaments. But this, added I, is a downright insult upon the family.

“ Mr. Iscariot is a gentleman,” said

her Ladyship, smiling with the utmost complacency, "and I doubt not will be an honour to Christianity."

When I came, however, to request the dowager's assistance, I found the five hundred very inefficient. It was enough to purchase silence, but not co-operation. I offered a thousand. Her Ladyship demanded two. This I said, was exorbitant. We at last settled it at fifteen hundred.

But a new difficulty arose. Lady Littleworth was inclined to leave nothing to chance, whereas Mr. Iscariot's idea of remuneration were of a nature wholly conditional. Her Ladyship insisted that the whole sum should be paid down. Mr. Iscariot would only secure the money to be paid within an hour after the performance of the ceremony.

Several days passed before the negotiations were completed. I gave up the business in despair, above a dozen

times ; but at last it was settled that her Ladyship should receive a fee at starting of five hundred pounds ; the remaining thousand to be paid at the return from church.

As to Lady Erpingham, I intended she should reconcile herself to the match. Indeed, I inwardly chuckled at the thought of her Ladyship's rage at the first *exposé*. I imagined the mingling the noble blood of the Vavasours with the red puddle of the Iscariots would rouse her from her state of torpor, if to rouse her was possible. I fancied that such a circumstance would most unquestionably excite her anger, but although I arranged her features in every possible way, I could not picture to myself how she would look in a passion.

By the aid of our new ally, the matter was brought nearly to a certainty. I paid every attention in my power to the Jews, but as they were positively

forbidden a seat at the dinner table, my means of entertaining them were not so extensive as I could have wished, or as their merits deserved. But they were not nice. Their sole object was high blood, and they kindly attributed Lady Erpingham's neglect of them to *low breeding*.

My next step was to prepare my daughter to the match. I represented to her, the extreme eligibility of the proposals which Mr. Shadrach Iscariot had made. I led her to compare the settlement that would be secured to her, on her becoming the widow of Mr. Iscariot, with the amount that had been offered from other quarters. I rung all the possible changes on equipages, jewels, dresses, &c. &c. &c., and I doubt not with all the volubility and urgency of an experienced match-maker.

Caroline was a most dutiful child. She expressed her willingness to fol-

low the advice of her dear papa, and did not make the slightest objection, either to the Jews, or to the secresy, which I enjoined her to preserve to every person, except Lady Littleworth. I particularly cautioned her against Lady Erpingham, and Miss Toad-eater, who would rather see her a noble beggar, than the wife of the richest and most respectable commoner in the kingdom. Lady Littleworth, I assured her was, with the exception of myself, her only sincere friend. I further harangued upon the very great merits of the dowager, and hoped that Caroline would have such a regard to her own interest as to adhere to Lady Littleworth's suggestions on every point that concerned her future welfare.

Matters went on swimmingly. My new friend deposited the five hundred pounds in my hand for Lady Littleworth. This I presented to her, and

I much question if an additional five hundred would not have made her as great an admirer of the laws of Moses as she had formerly been a reviler of his institutions. Mr. Shadrach Iscariot was now a young man of the most fascinating manners, and had not the wife of the elder Mr. Iscariot still continued in the land of the living, I doubt if the dowager would not have taken all allowable means, of robbing him of his liberty, but only to join with him in plucking the roses, and avoiding the thorns of life. Old Mr. Iscariot, in my eyes, was as disgusting a biped as I ever recollect to have seen, but what the old gentleman wanted in personal attractions, Lady Littleworth discovered to be amply compensated by his mental accomplishments.

According to their agreement Mr. Iscariot and his son publicly adjured the synagogue. A bill of naturalization was brought into parliament. An

extensive estate was on the eve of being purchased. The settlements were in progress. I had the seventy thousand pounds already in my hand—in imagination; and every thing seemed placed beyond the power of chance to effect a disarrangement of plans, which all the parties concerned were apparently forwarding with the most cordial co-operation.

CHAP. XV.

A SON-IN-LAW.

BUT fate had decreed that Lady Erpingham should descend to the grave unruffled, as far as regarded Mr. Iscariot, and that the blood of the Vavasours should preserve its purity from all Jewish contagion for the present. The ceremonials which were to make my daughter Lady Caroline Iscariot, were to be performed in a few days, and, as far as it was prudent Mr. Shadrach was received with all the respect due to a future relative, when one morning the house was in a

state of confusion from the unaccountable absence of the bride elect. Lady Littleworth was distracted, she made the most minute enquiries among the domestics, and sought for her protégée in every direction. But to no purpose. Lady Caroline was no where to be found, nor were any traces of her discoverable.

The dowager betrayed the most serious alarm. She was roused from her golden dreams. The thousand pounds *in petto* vanished from her imaginary grasp. She flew to Lady Erpingham. But Lady Erpingham was a true disciple of Zeno. Her Ladyship did not stand in need of comfort herself, and felt not the slightest inclination to impart it. Miss Toadeater, indeed, took some interest in Caroline's fate, for she asked some questions of the domestics.

The dinner hour arrived, and Caroline still failed to make her appear-

ance. Nothing had transpired in the mean time to account for her extraordinary conduct. Her female attendant remained on the spot, but to prevent any counterplot, Lady Littleworth, since her becoming the friend of Mr. Iscariot, had superseded the abigial in almost all her offices of personal attendance. No information, therefore, could be derived from that source.

Mr. Iscariot and his son, came to me as usual in the evening, and expressed the deepest sorrow on the melancholy occasion. I own that my own feelings were not much more acute than those of Lady Erpingham, as far as Caroline was concerned, but the loss of the money made me as uneasy in reality, as the Jews were in appearance.

Mr. Shadrach suggested the idea of elopement, while his father seemed inclined to accuse Lady Littleworth of

having betrayed the cause she had undertaken to support.

I defended the dowager upon the plea of self-interest, which I was satisfied was, with her, a most irresistible stimulus, and as to elopement I could not bring myself to believe it possible. Neither Lady Littleworth nor myself could fix upon any person with whom there was the most distant probability of her taking such a step. She had been at a ball on the preceding evening, but before her going there she had privately met Mr. Shadrach in my study, and had permitted him to breathe his vows of eternal constancy and love.

But the suspicions of Mr. Shadrach were correct. Lady Caroline Monkton had been met in her journey to Scotland in the company of Captain Flanagan, a half-pay officer, whom for the first time she had met at the ball in question.

I regretted extremely the failure of my plans, but the greatest sufferer was Lady Littleworth, from whom the Jews demanded back the five hundred pounds, on pain of a public exposure of the transaction. Her Ladyship for some time wavered between "mammon," and her dignity, but at last she contrived to make a compromise with the Iscariots, but of what nature I know not, as being no longer a necessary personage in Lady Erpingham's establishment, she was speedily dispatched to her state and starvation. Perhaps the dowager undertook to make good Mr. Shadrach's admission to some other noble family. At all events, I understood that they continued on terms of intimacy.

The disappointment to Mr. Iscariot the elder, was, however, by no means inconsiderable. He had apostatized that his son might mingle with the Vavasours and Erpinghams, but when

the behaviour of Caroline had opposed an insurmountable barrier to the union, he was left to the stings and goadings of conscience. His first care was to endeavour to reconcile himself to the synagogue he had so lately foresworn. But he was denied admittance. His next idea, I believe, was to hang himself, and perhaps had not such a proceeding been necessarily attended with a parting from his enormous wealth, he might have put this plan of comforting himself into execution.

I endeavoured to make the best of the business. The jew's money would indeed have been extremely serviceable, but as there was now no possibility of my obtaining any part of it, my only remedy was to seek for some other means of discharging my embarrassments. With the fox, I reasoned that the "grapes were sour," and called my pride to my assistance in extinguishing my chagrin. My

daughter had thought proper to provide for herself, and had thereby relieved me from all further cares on her account. Upon the whole, when I came to balance the advantages of a jewish connection, with it attendant disadvantages, I was almost as well satisfied that it had not taken place.

In about a week from the elopement, I received a penitential letter from Captain and Lady Caroline Flanagan, asking pardon for their precipitation and want of filial respect, but pleading the violence of their mutual love, (of six hours standing), and begging permission to throw themselves at my feet.

I readily received them into favour, having no motive whatever to indulge in useless displeasure. My daughter in the course of the first interview went still further in excusing herself, for she alleged her elopement to the dread of endangering her precious soul by uniting herself with a jew.

The "happy pair," established themselves in private lodgings, where they passed the honey moon, and if they passed it to their mutual satisfaction, Caroline was more highly favoured than her parents. To all outward appearance they were extremely loving, and I sincerely wished them the enjoyment of that happiness which, by the bye, I felt thoroughly aware was beyond their reach.

I was so much the friend of the new married couple as to intercede with Miss Toadeater in their behalf, begging that she would represent the affair to Lady Erpingham in as favourable terms as possible. The companion promised every thing, but nothing followed her performances. Lady Erpingham was inexorable.—Her daughter had degraded herself and her family, and she gave positive directions that the name of Flanagan should never be mentioned within her hear-

ing, upon the pain of her most severe displeasure.

Her Ladyship held out for some weeks, but a reconciliation was at last effected by the interposition of a perfect stranger, who, without knowing her Ladyship, chanced to mention in her hearing that the Captain, her son-in-law, was the second cousin thrice removed of the present Lord Carrigrohane, whom she was well assured was lineally descended from the ancient chiefs of the Firbolg and hereditary kings of Munster.

This information paved the way for her receiving the Captain's homage. On the next overture for reconciliation he was admitted to plead his own cause, and allowed to salute her hand. The Countess received the "*royal*" Flanagan with every outward testimony of regard, but her culprit daughter did not enter into her good graces for a great length of time. The Coun-

less could forgive the Captain for aspiring to the Vavasours, but she could not extend the forgiveness to her daughter for having connected herself with ignobility, even though royally descended.

As soon as the reconciliation could be deemed complete the Captain made the usual application to me for his wife's fortune. I told him that he had already received it, in the cloaths which Lady Caroline had carried with her to Scotland. In addition to this her wardrobe had been carefully forwarded to his lodgings. The Captain insisted that his wife was possessed of twenty thousand pounds, for she had told him so. This I strenuously denied, but acknowledged that it was in my power, if I chose it, but not otherwise, to settle that amount upon her. The royal Flanagan maintained that it was the same, any how, seeing that twenty thousand was still twenty

thousand, and whether it was his wife's own, or whether it came from myself, it made no difference, at all, at all,—so that he received it either in money or bank notes, he was not particular which.

I begged to undeceive him as to his at all, at all, coming into contact either with a guinea of her fortune, or even the ghost of a guinea, as I had heard a one pound note vulgarly denominated. I assured him that I was by no means averse to my daughter's receiving all the benefit of the settlement I was empowered to make; so far from it indeed, that I should take especial care that it should not be diverted in any possible manner from her sole and exclusive use, and that too in such a way that she should not have the power of rendering herself a beggar if she was so inclined.

The Captain's eye-lids extended gradually during my last speech, and

towards the latter part they had arrived at their utmost powers of expansion. I conveyed my meaning in a mild yet firm and determined manner. The look of the Captain I can compare to nothing but what I imagine would be indicated upon the countenance of a man, who, for reasons best known to himself, doubted the evidence of his own senses.

With the utmost simplicity of manner, the Captain quietly requested me to inform him how he and Lady Caroline Flanagan were to live. I told him that on a point of such extreme delicacy I could not think of interfering. He and his wife, I further observed, had no doubt consulted their own inclination in uniting themselves, and they would doubtless consult their own convenience as to the mode in which they would choose to continue together.

The Captain gave a deep sigh, say-

ing by "Jasus" he was "bit," but it was no fault of mine. I had been a "frind" to him, and had been so kind as not to "*desave*" him, which was more than he could say of all the rest of the world. His regiment was just disbanded and he himself had nothing but his half-pay to live upon as a gentleman, and seeing how much he was in debt, how could he *kape* a wife that had nothing belonging to her but a great big appetite.

I observed that upon his former means, he had previously contrived to live, and as he always, I presumed, carried the appearance of a gentleman, they must be sufficient to enable him to do so.

"And by Jasus," cried the Captain as he turned every one of his pockets inside out, "I hav'nt a thirteen, and not enough to get that sweet sprig of nobility her meal of potatoes."

I expressed my sincere regret at his

unfortunate situation, more particularly as it was out of my power to render any effectual assistance. But although my means were at present confined, Lady Erpingham might probably open her heart and her purse, especially as she had entirely overcome her repugnance to the marriage.

——“And get milk from a dry cow. Her ladyship, begging her pardon, is little better than an old faggot,—only fit to burn, and yet wont burn neither.”——

I could do nothing but shrug up my shoulders——

“But,” continued the Captain, with a smile of self satisfaction, “you have got a nate little sate in parliament just vacant like, and if you’d just pop me into it, I’d be after paying my debts with my privilege.”

I was not aware that there had been any vacancy in my boroughs till the Captain informed me, but as I had

not then lost sight of common decency, I declined putting in even my new relative, conscious that he had no one qualification for a legislator.

The Captain put his unhappy condition in a great variety of shapes, but I was alike inexorable to all. From arguments he got to persuasions, from thence to prayer, and lastly to threats. As I could not personally contend with him I called for assistance. Attacked front and rear he beat a retreat, to my great satisfaction, and I wish I could add that his retreat from me had been equally to my daughter's satisfaction; but I fear he exhausted that rage upon his unoffending rib which he meditated towards her farther.

The failure of the Captain's matrimonial schemes soon got wind. He had for some time amused his creditors with his prospects in fortune hunting, which he had from time to time represented as certainties; but now the

all noose was tied and all hopes had
perished, their patience was exhaust-

They adopted a system of coercion, and civilly provided the descendant of royalty with apartments in the King's Bench, to which place he found convenient to remove upon a moment's notice.



CHAP. XVI.

RETRENCHMENT.

THE Captain, to use a common phraseology, being gone upon his travels, Lady Caroline Flanagan was returned upon my hands; not much indeed the worse for wear, but as she was now totally unmarketable, it was incumbent upon me to take the proper steps for her future maintenance. Lady Erpingham did not make the slightest objection to her daughter being again an inmate in the same house with herself, notwithstanding her being a Flanagan, but it was coupled with a condition that Caroline should be

considered as my guest and not hers ; meaning thereby that she should conform to the rules and regulations to which I had submitted, and which had been strictly enforced ever since my late return to Erpingham House.

But Lady Caroline was too heartily sick of her mother to remain under the same roof with her at any rate. As I could provide for her in a moderate way, without much personal inconvenience, I did not hesitate in putting her in possession of the means which would enable her to chuse a place of residence congenial to her disposition. I settled the twenty thousand pounds upon her in such a way that she could only receive the interest by monthly payments, and those only on her own receipt. I left the business in the hands of the lawyers with especial directions that no one should in any way interfere with her fortune, while the creditors of the Captain were kind

enough to take care that *he* should not interfere with her person. As soon as the arrangements were completed, by which the widow bewitched was assured of her income of one thousand a year, she took up her residence with Lady Littleworth, for whom she had always expressed a very great regard.

The choice of Caroline was eligible on every account. She lived under the sanction of a person of undoubted respectability. Lady Littleworth already maintained an external state, and the addition of Caroline's means would enable both to enjoy internal comforts.

My daughter has latterly absorbed all my attention, to the entire exclusion of my son. But Lady Caroline was happily off my hands, and I could have wished that it had been in my power to say the same thing of Charles. But although he has made no figure at all upon *my* page of history, during

his sister's *debut*, he was far from being an inactive performer at the Erpingham theatre. His expences, instead of increasing with his years, actually increased with his days. His expenditure in horses and stable paraphernalia were fully equal to my own, in my early days of folly. Without the formality of opening an account, he made me his banker. He set himself up as a judge of horse-flesh ; but, somehow or other, the horses which he purchased as tremendous bargains, were either sold again at a heavy loss, or else were speedily condemned for dog's meat.

So long as I had the means of meeting the calls of my son, I refrained from worrying him with lessons upon economy ; but, at last, his demands for *pocket-money* became so exorbitant, as to outstrip my own former extravagance, under more favourable circumstances. To mend the matter, although

Charles could scarcely be deemed to have attained to manhood, I learnt that two ladies had been, for some time, in the habits of levying pretty considerable contributions upon him. Altogether, it was no wonder that his purse stood very frequently in need of replenishment. My refusal to comply with these unceasing demands, which was really occasioned by my inability to meet them, drove the young heir to supply his wants in the way immemorially adopted in such cases, of borrowing a hundred to be repaid by a thousand. At first, I gave Charles credit for having resorted to retrenchment and economy ; but I soon discovered that he was raising loan upon loan, without providing any thing resembling a sinking fund to discharge them. However, I had no means of preventing his engaging in those ruinous proceedings, so long as he could meet with encouragement to pursue them.

All the causes which had operated in converting Erpingham House into an imaginary palace of pleasure had now completely ceased, and that without leaving a wreck of satisfaction behind, which could in any degree compensate for the enormous sacrifices which had been made. There was now no occasion for an extra porter to give admission to the indefatigable labourers in the field of luxury and extravagance. The manna had ceased to fall, and all the glittering attractions had vanished. There was nothing more to be obtained, and the knocker of the door began to rust for want of use.

When the house was reduced to its former scale, I began to feel a little more at ease. I made every allowance for my son's extravagance, and curtailed my own expences, that, by increasing his allowance, I might detach him from such ruinous expedients. Perhaps in this I was actuated more

by pride than affection, and only parted with that which I could no longer enjoy.

At the close of the season, the tradesmen's bills came pouring in upon me from all quarters. The pile they exhibited upon my table terrified me; and my alarms were far from being lessened, when, by the exertion of my arithmetical powers, I managed to arrive at the sum total. I had foolishly taken it into my head, that I had sufficiently answered all demands, by the advances which I made from time to time to the house-steward. But these advances were only for extraordinaries, and formed no part of the regular estimates. A most formidable feature in the account of extraordinaries was, the cash paid to Lady Littleworth's checks—ostensibly, I imagine, to defray the charges of herself and Caroline for ice-creams and gewgaws; but I take it, in reality, to line the pockets of her

ladyship. Another such a bout, and I have no doubt that the Dowager might have kept a cook for the rest of her life, and supported the expence of a daily fire in the kitchen, together with a reasonable portion of eatables.

The amount of the ordinaries were so numerous, that if I was still called upon to support the establishment of Lady Erpingham, as stipulated in our marriage articles, I could not expect to discharge them, by the most rigid economy, in the natural course of my life; and I had not yet arrived at that pitch of self-command, as to feel satisfied at being loaded with debts which I had no prospect of paying. My son's extravagance stared me full in the face, and I saw no means of extricating myself from permanent embarrassment, but by the assistance of my wife. Charles still wanted three years of being of age, and I could tell by experience, what little dependance

could be placed on a son, on such an event taking place. Charles might have the same prejudices which I myself entertained on a like occasion. Our situation was, indeed, very different. I was independent in every respect; but in two or three years, I felt aware, that his necessities would call as loudly for some arrangement to satisfy our mutual wants, as mine. Still the event was distant, and far from certain. Creditors would, in the mean time, be importunate; and I could not expect to be a moment free from solicitations, with which it would be out of my power to comply. To Lady Erpingham therefore I directed my attention.

A school-boy never felt a greater dread of a flogging than I did at this portentous interview. I had made up my mind to be referred to Mr. Frill, at the first word. But such was the sovereign contempt with which I viewed

her ladyship's solicitor, that I resolved on no account to submit.

My application for an audience was answered, as usual, by Miss Toad-eater. Her ladyship would receive me at five o'clock.

At five I presented myself at the door of her ladyship's anti-room, and was there met by the amiable companions, who, after she had regularly announced my approach, with much ceremony led me to the chamber of audience.

After the regular interchange of formal civilities, I was requested to be seated. As soon as I was settled in my chair, her ladyship, who at my entrance had arisen from her sofa of state, again resumed her place, looking towards me for an explanation of the causes which had led me to her apartment.

In a speech which lasted about half an hour, I entered into a detailed ac

count of my financial resources, which I clearly proved to her were in a by no means satisfactory. I appealed to her good sense as to the propriety of her reducing her establishment level with my present income. Careless I urged, was her child as well as mine, and it was the endeavouring to secure an eligible match for our daughter, which had plunged me into a state of embarrassment, which I should otherwise have avoided. I plainly proved to her that without some such arrangement the income which remained to me would be entirely absorbed by the payment of debts contracted by our extravagance; and that I should not have it in my power to advance a single shilling towards the support of our son.

Her ladyship listened with her usual gracious attention. I had closed my speech with a recapitulation of

to a final pause, I naturally cast my eyes towards her ladyship in expectation of some reply.

“ I will see Mr. Frill in the morning, my lord ; and——”

“ Zounds, madam ! Mr. Frill is——”

Her ladyship gradually drew up her chest, and during the operation of laying her arms in the most dignified manner across her chest, she interrupted me by saying, that she was usually styled Countess of Erpingham.

“ Well then ! Countess of Erpingham——”

“ My Lord Erpingham, you insult me——”

“ My Lady Erpingham, I have been laying before you a plain matter of fact ; can you, or can you not, give me a plain answer ?”

“ Business, my Lord Erpingham,” said her Ladyship, rising majestically from her seat,—“ business I make a point of leaving in the hands of those

who are properly qualified to conduct it. Mr. Frill is——”

“ —— A puppy of a coxcomb, with whom I should degrade myself by holding any further intercourse.”

“ You will, nevertheless, my Lord, make Mr. Frill the medium of any communications which you may deem necessary or adviseable to make to me, either on this or on any other affair of business. It is the only way in which I can receive them. Your lordship will think it needless to extend the conversation——”

“ But your ladyship will allow me to——”

Her ladyship had applied her hand to the bell-rope, the instant she rose from her seat. As she uttered her prohibition to further talk, she rung it. A footman made his appearance, and before I could complete my sentence, he was desired to conduct Lord Erpingham to the door.

If I felt inclined to make a simile, I should compare my retreat to that of a dog who had burnt his tail. Had any one told me, some time before this event, that I should have tamely submitted to such treatment, I should have strenuously denied the possibility. But when a man becomes familiar with uneasiness, his pride and self-consequence are apt to fail him. His mind gets too much occupied with what relates to himself, and with the means of overcoming difficulties, to allow him to pay that degree of attention to the neglect and behaviour of others, which, under more favourable auspices, would have made a deep and lasting impression.

At one time I entertained serious thoughts of going abroad, and of leaving my creditors to make what applications they chose to Lady Erpingham. But the situation of my son prevented my putting that plan into execution.

I had too sorely experienced the want of a father's care, to leave Charles wholly without an adviser. Independent of this, I had not totally lost sight of common honesty. I had contracted debts ; and it was my bounden duty to see that they were carefully discharged.

END OF VOL. III.

SOME ACCOUNT

OF

MYSELF.



SOME
COUNT OF MYSELF.

BY
CHARLES EARL OF ERPINGHAM,
&c. &c. &c.

IN
Four Volumes.

is my intention to represent Characters such as
e in life; but Heaven forbid that I should pourtray
mon in particular."— **LE SAGE.**

VOL. IV.

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SOME ACCOUNT

OF

MYSELF.

CHAP. I.

WAYS AND MEANS.

TO communicate personally with Mr. Frill was out of the question; but as I conceived that Lady Erpingham's pride would lead her to support the consequence of her husband, I did not altogether despair of inducing her to bend to circumstances, and to afford her aid in sustaining the *true* dignity of our families.

But as Mr. Frill was the sole or of her Ladyship's will and pleas there was no alternative left to me, must either have given up all idea of obtaining relief, or submit to the terms prescribed. Mr. Frill, however, being only the representative of my wife did not conceive there would be any impropriety in calling in the aid of a deputy, in my behalf. Every instance where I had called in the assistance of lawyers, had served to increase my disgust towards them; and, at the time of which I am now writing, my dislike had amounted to absolute aversion.

There was no one whom I could venture to trouble, on such an occasion, but Mr. Gordon, whose management of my son had ranked him high in my esteem. Charles, as it was, had vicious propensities enough in all conscience, but I am satisfied he would have been much worse, had not Mr. Gordon maintained some influence over his conduct.

This was indeed the first time in my life that I had asked advice from any one; nor should I, in all probability, have done it on the present occasion, had not necessity driven me to it. Mr. Gordon was already generally acquainted with my concerns; it required, therefore, but little trouble to explain the business fully to him. He kindly accepted the appointment, and I furnished him with the proper credentials to discuss the affair with Mr. Frill; and also to agree, on my part, to such conditions as might be thought advisable for the general interest of the parties concerned.

The result of the conference was such as I ought to have anticipated. Mr. Frill considered that the marriage articles ought to be the guide of her ladyship's conduct. Mr. Gordon urged the peculiarity of my situation, and the causes which had been instrumental in reducing me to my present state of

embarrassment. Mr. Frill referred to the deed of settlement, and seemed to argue with Shylock upon his bond, that unless Mr. Gordon could rail the seal from off the deed, he did but offend his lungs to talk so loud. The meeting closed with Mr. Frill declaring, that it was utterly impossible that Lady Erpingham should forego her claims in the slightest degree.

I have already told the reader, that with my usual folly of precipitancy, I had consented, that the whole of the Erpingham estates should be assigned to trustees, during the term of my natural life, in case Lady Erpingham should so long live, in order that her state and dignity should be properly maintained ; and that an income should be assured to her, adequate to the expences of her establishment. But the consequences of my hastiness I was yet to feel. What passed between Mr. Gordon and Mr. Frill was, I imagine, com-

municated by the latter, to Lady Erpingham's trustees; for it was intimated to me, a few days after the meeting, that the friends of my wife conceived it to be their duty to exert their powers.

Hitherto, although my steward at Erpingham had regularly handed over the rents as they accrued to her ladyship's directions, the receipts were given to the tenants in my name. But the trustees now gave me notice, that they intended to take possession of the property, to prevent her ladyship from sustaining any inconvenience.

When Mr. Frill's note to that effect was delivered to me, I raged, raved, tore, and I have no doubt, acted the madman to the life. I cursed myself. I cursed my wife; and even went so far as to curse the obstinacy of the coachman who had been the original cause of my unhappy marriage.

If I had been wise, I should have

blessed the lawyer who had omitted to tie up the Bingwood estates in the same halter. How it was possible for the immense income of the Erpingham estates to be consumed in empty state, I know not; all I am certain of is, that from the day of my unfortunate marriage, I never received one shilling from them.

The only glimmering of hope which was left me, was from the assistance of my son, at his coming of age. The Erpingham estates I could not touch during his mother's life; but the Bingwood property would be at our entire disposal, and would serve to extricate me from the difficulties in which I was at present involved, and Charles from those which I was confident his natural turn for extravagance would bring upon him. His paternal property would descend to him free and unincumbered; and was certainly of sufficient extent to maintain the dignity of his family,

and to satisfy the desires of any one whose ideas were not of the most exorbitant description.

But the period to which I looked forward was far too distant to put off creditors with common excuses. I therefore determined to summon them together for the purpose of laying before them a statement of my affairs, that we should all of us know what we had to trust to. My detestation of attorneys, however, was insurmountable; and my pride forbade me to enter into any personal explanations, even had my abilities been adequate to the task. Thus situated, I again craved the friendly assistance of Mr. Gordon, from whose mild and placid manners I expected a favourable result.

I was not disappointed. They who deal with nobility are not backward in making their charges proportionate to the usual delay of payment. According to their phraseology, they cal-

culate upon the living paying dead. In fact, patience was the resource. I had seen a little of this kind, but I seldom found that a tradesman would press his debt when waiting would be the only way of getting it discharged. In respect they bear a strong resemblance to the attorney, who always has a point to tell the truth, when he would not serve his purpose.

I was relieved, for a time from further molestation, on giving for the respective debts, payable six months of my son's attain age of twenty-one, but bearing from the day on which they were cut.

I had now more than two years before me, that I could expect in tolerable ease and quiet; and as means were still further increased, an unexpected dissolution of the partnership.

In the commencement of my present labours, I promised that I would not willingly make any concealment of incidents, however much they redounded to my disgrace. If I had not so committed myself, I might perhaps have been induced to gloss over what I am now going to relate. Necessity is not only the mother of invention, but she also often leads us into a line of conduct, neither creditable nor in unison with sound and honest principles.

When my son-in-law, Captain Flanagan, had the impudence to propose that I should place him in one of my boroughs which were vacant, I recoiled with inward horror at the very thought of employing a sacred privilege to the purposes of fraud. From the time of the contested election, from whence all my subsequent evils had arisen, my influence in a certain assembly has constantly remained with

the party whose cause I had espoused upon that occasion. I never had communication with the party when my sanction was necessary to their purposes. It was then I declared myself with an appearance of firmness; because, to have interfered in any way, would have been in upon my natural indolence.

At the dissolution which I just mentioned, the trustees of Erpingham thought it proper to use their newly acquired influence in the boroughs, with a view of giving support to the party in power. My friends, who had been so long in the undisturbed possession of the borough, soon caught the alarm, and called upon me to assert the right which the trustees had endeavoured to usurp. Had it been any persons but the friends of Lady Erpingham who had thus invaded my privileges, I might have resisted; but as it was, I deterred

to resist every encroachment which they should venture to make.

On a careful examination of their powers, they thought it prudent to withdraw their pretensions; but having promised the seats, in return for some valuable consideration, their inability in the performance created a considerable degree of confusion. The party in power had calculated on their partisans being returned, and it was of consequence to them that their plans should be carried into effect.

I was on the point of renewing my promises to my old friends, when I was waited upon one morning by a gentleman, who made his way to me by some excuse, which I have forgotten, but who did not leave me long in doubt as to the real motives of his visit. This was neither more nor less than to ask me if I should consider twenty thousand pounds an adequate compensation for my trouble in return-

the history of my country, as perhaps I ought to have been, I startled at horrible combination of bribery corruption. The gentleman smiled at the warmth with which I expressed myself, and assured me that such practices were as "notorious as sun at noon day."

He then pressed me for an answer but this I declined to give without further consideration. I had two excuses for the delay. The first was I doubt whether I could reconcile the matter to my conscience. The other was an intention, if I made a bargain of that description at all, to make it to the best advantage.

solved to accept that sum in case, I could not make a better bargain in another quarter. With this last view I applied to a person, who was represented as a most extensive trafficker in seats. By his means I was offered the sum of four thousand five hundred pounds each, for three seats. This I mentioned to the person who had bid the twenty thousand for the six.

As he had made the first application, I said he might have the refusal of the whole on the same terms. He promised to consider of it, but assured me that such a sum was out of the question. I was so little acquainted with the science of negociation that, instead, of endeavouring to obtain a higher price, I eagerly closed for the three seats at the terms proposed.

The following day, my twenty thousand friend offered to purchase the whole six at the rate I had mentioned to him. But it was too late, there were

only three seats remaining. As however, were better than none the bargain was made, and in a time I found myself in the possession of twenty-seven thousand pounds, derived from a source which I never expected to obtain a farthing.

As the business turned out, my conscience was completely quieted. I had three members, who were strong supporters of the right hand side of the chair, and three who were equally strenuous on the left hand side. My interest was thus neutralized, for I did no good, I at least did no harm. Under other circumstances I might have found room for self reproach, but as it was, I was thoroughly satisfied.

The money which the borough produced set both my son and myself at ease. I gave him a most liberal allowance. I was liberal, indeed, that with the pa-

of debts, which he had contracted, and his customary expenditure, before the succeeding winter was half gone through, there was not a vestige of the twenty seven thousand pounds remaining, and both Charles and myself were again in debt.

CHAP. II.**SUPPLY.**

IN the course of the winter, and at a time when embarrassment again began to press upon me, a prospect opened before me, which promised effectual relief for the present, and a large income for the future.

Being in conversation one night at Boodle's with a baronet of very extensive landed property, he informed me of the immense improvements he had recently effected on his estates. He told me that although his old tenants had refused to make any further ad-

vances, he had fortunately met with a surveyor of most uncommon abilities, who had recently let a great part of his lands, at three times the former rent.

“It is astonishing,” added he, “in what a backward state we suffer ourselves to remain in the southern part of the island. We do every thing twice over. We carry out, and we return empty handed. Our horses are so heavy that empty or loaded their pace is unvaried. Our farmers are as heavy, as their horses, and as obstinate as their mules. There is a want of energy throughout. Our bigotted countrymen are incapable of comprehending the principles of enlightened cultivation. But let us turn our eyes to the north. See there what the spirit of industry directed by the hand of science can perform, in a climate, which compared with ours, is unfriendly to the pursuits of active

husbandry. Look at the great amount of the rents realized from the Scotch estates. Examine the rapidity with which all farming operations are there conducted, and then let us blush for the stupidity of old England."

Here was an end to all my difficulties. In my imagination I tripled the rental of Bingwood estates, and felt myself again exalted to the regions of opulence.

"Pray, Sir John," said I eagerly, "favour me with your surveyor's address. I see at once the advantages. Besides, the affording every facility to the introduction of an improved system, must unquestionably be a benefit to the public at large, and entitle the promoter to the general thanks of the community."

I do not apprehend that I should have exhibited much public spirit on the occasion, had not my own interest been so materially concerned. I went

ed in the full determination of not
ring a day to elapse before I com-
ced my proceedings. My waking
ghts, and even my dreams were
occupied in arranging the several
les in the air which I was inces-
ly building, fit for my habitation.

fter a restless night, I rose earlier

usual, and having indulged
elf in counting my imaginary
sands, I dispatched a note to
Alexander M'Estimate, in Saint
es's Street, requesting the favour
is calling at Erpingham House at
earliest convenience. I confess, I
e the request with considerable
lence, from the judgment I was
led to form of men of importance
ged in professional avocations, by
intercourse with the great Mr.

. But great folks must be allow-
ertain privileges, to which little
dare not aspire. If puppies are
l into consequence by the obse-

quiousness of those who have de
with them, they would be fools if th
not save themselves all possible tr
and take the most advantage of t
mage paid them. All I shall ev
in blame of these great men is t
sure them for not adopting the
nient method of the late Mr. B
Van Butchell, and notify to the
“ come from ten to one, for I
none.” Such a notification und
office bell would save an infi
vexation, and render a world
planation unnecessary.

The town deputy of Mr. M'Ee
informed me in reply, that his
cipal had left town only half an
before my note was received, t
ceed in the first instance to his
sive farm in Oxfordshire, from v
he was to go into North Wiltsh
the purpose of viewing some
estates, which had been recently
under his direction in that part

country. In eight or nine days Mr. M'Estimate was expected to return to London, but would even then have hardly a moment to pay attention to my new connexion.

How unlucky! Eight or nine days to be thus wasted and frittered away. But what was to be done? I thought at one moment of following Mr. M'Estimate, that I might receive his instructions as to the preliminary proceedings, but I gave up the idea, fearful that I might offend the gentleman by coming unbidden into his presence, and thereby lose all the advantages I expected to derive from his able assistance.

To expedite the business, as far as lay in my power, I followed the example of Mr. Evenington on his marriage with Miss Broad, and gave notices to every tenant upon the Bingwood property, without exception, to quit their farms at the ensuing Michael-

mas. As was the case upon the B estates, some held by leases, which my great regret, rendered all no unavailing, but I was fearful if I acted any, I might injure myself.

The eight or nine days elapsed out. Mr. M'Estimate making his appearance, but on the twelfth I had supreme felicity of an interview with him. I dare say, the reader is sufficiently acquainted with my impatience, to make it unnecessary for me to tell him that on the tenth and eleventh days of Mr. M'Estimate's absence, my time was almost wholly occupied in traversing St. James Street, in eager expectation of the gentleman's return.

Mr. M'Estimate fully justified the eulogium, which my friend the baronet had bestowed upon him, for he undertook, without seeing the estates, even enquiring whether they were

or low rented, to increase the rental threefold.

“His countrymen,” he said, “who were the only people upon earth that thoroughly understood the true principles of agriculture, must have their lands free from incumbrances of every description, the rent excepted, which must be fixed and decided. They were wholly unused to tythes and cesses. They must not be clogged as to their mode of effecting improvements. Covenants were a kind of things, which were well enough adapted to the narrow minded, and still narrower comprehension of the grovelling Englishman, but were totally beneath the attention of the enlightened and scientific Scotchman. Covenants were, indeed, invented to restrain the bad farmer, and ought never to prevent the good farmer from benefitting himself, and the property he cultivates. Upon the new system every accommodation must be

afforded for the carrying on the operations, or how could it be expected that rents should be paid, which in this part of the country, until very lately, had never been heard of. A little sacrifice might reasonably be expected to be made in bringing a new system to perfection, but once made the way hereafter would be smooth and clear."

I was delighted at the eloquence of Mr. M'Estimate. There was a grandeur in his conceptions which surprized me, and a comprehensiveness of ideas which astonished me. He appeared to have a soul for great designs, together with mental and bodily powers for carrying them into execution.

At the very first interview I formally appointed him to the superintendence of the Bingwood estates, attaching only one condition to his assumption of authority. This was merely an undertaking on his part to proceed with me

to Bingwood without a moment's loss of time.

Early the following morning we set off on our journey. He took a cursory view of the property, and declared himself in raptures at the great capabilities, which it afforded. The land he discovered in an instant to be all of it admirably adapted to the improved husbandry. I confess myself to have wondered a little at hearing that it was *all* admirably adapted, and ventured to point out that the soil had all the varieties, from the stiffest clay, to the lightest sand. But all sorts were equally well adapted to Scottish cultivation, and I was asked what would become of a country like Great Britain, if one particular soil alone was susceptible of improvement. The question was put in a tone of voice which completely silenced me, and prevented me from making any other enquiry, lest Mr. M'Estimate might choose to fancy him-

offended, and desert me at a moment when I most wanted his assistance. I remember, that at the time I managed to swallow a mode of expression, which certainly amounted to impudence, I resolved to retaliate as soon as my purposes were served.

Mr. M'Estimate gave me no intimation of the course he meant to adopt but in less than three weeks the Scotchmen poured upon Bingwood like a flight of crows. Advertisements have been inserted in the Northern papers, and from the enormous quantity that made their appearance, Scotland must most assuredly have suffered from the sudden emigration. For every farm which was declared to be vacant, there were at least a score of competitors. But as all were in want of situations, and all willing to establish themselves and their abilities on my property, they considered that they were entitled to every consideration on my part. Their

proverbial modesty was, indeed, particularly striking. They were ready to take any farm upon Mr. M'Estimate's recommendation, but such as I could not provide for, I was expected not only to entertain during their stay at Bingwood, but to recompense for their time, and expences from their leaving the "land of cakes," till their return to it.

I remonstrated with Mr. M'Estimate upon this demand, to which I conceived that I had no right to accede, but I was answered by questions. How could I expect that his countrymen would run a personal risk to benefit me, and to improve the face of the country in general? Was it not reasonable that they receive a remuneration, when their great object was my benefit?

From the bevy Mr. M'Estimate selected such as he thought proper to retain, and appointed them to their

respective situations, on which they were to enter at the stipulated time. I compromised with the remainder to allow them five pounds each, upon a release from all further claims, to which Mr. M'Estimate assured me I was liable. I was not lawyer enough to be exactly aware of the extent of my liability, but I was indolent enough rather to make a small sacrifice than to increase my troubles. They would not, perhaps, have been contented with so moderate a compensation, had I not given way to a portion of my old obstinacy before the worthy surveyor. It seemed that they followed his advice, or rather directions, and he acquired additional merit with me for the settlement of the business. I cannot say that the carrying the arrangement into execution was exactly pleasant, when I found that I had to pay very nearly two hundred claimants.

All my new friends were satisfied,

and I heard murmuring from no other quarter, except among my old tenants, who were thus thrown upon the wide world, and driven from the farms, which their forefathers had tilled, and upon which, many of them had grown grey.

But was I to sacrifice myself, and my country to provide for a few individuals, in the same grovelling manner in which they had been brought up? Was I for their sakes to abandon the most brilliant prospects? No! let them learn to enlarge their ideas, to take pattern by the examples, which were about to be set them, and there would be ample scope for the employment of their industry. They must have derived the most tremendous advantages from their previous occupations at such low rents, and if they had been improvident, what could they expect, but to be the sufferers for their former folly. They had only to thank my good nature, and

want of experience that had left them so long in possession of their enormous profits, but they could not rationally imagine that I should permit them to enjoy those profits to the end of the chapter to my own palpable loss.

In this way I reconciled myself to my new proceedings, in which I embarked with a blind fatuity. My old tenants were dispossessed in all places from whence it was in my power to remove them, and new leases of their farms were signed, sealed, and delivered to the new occupiers. I undertook to pay all rates, tithes, and taxes, now in existence, or hereafter to be imposed ;—to erect whatever buildings the new tenants thought necessary for the occupation of their farms ;—to make new roads in all directions, whenever I was required so to do ; together with a few other covenants on my part of a similar nature. Covenants on their part were out of the question, and they

themselves were to be the soles judges of necessity, so far as roads and buildings were concerned.

Mr. M'Estimate assured me that these were the customary terms, and such as were indispensable to the operations of his countrymen. By his advice, I even let my deer park, and the ornamental grounds about the abbey, to be put, as he termed it, into a productive state, reserving to myself, however, some of the plantations and ornamental trees. For the latter I made an allowance, after the rate of a quarter of an acre for every tree. Nothing could be more just and reasonable!

Nothing further could be done till Michaelmas arrived, but I already felt the first half year's payment in my hand, and looked down with contempt upon the stupidity of my neighbours.

The old steward remonstrated, and shrugged up his shoulders at what he thought proper to term "mad headed work."

"An old fool," I then thought, "be age and bigotry!"

CHAP. III.**MODERATION. :**

BEFORE the auspicious Michaelmas arrived, some of my new tenants had departed this life, leaving the world and their projected improvements behind them. Some of them had contrived to obtain better situations on this side paradise, and were desirous of being released from their bargains with me. This was also the case with others, who, for reasons known only to themselves, were anxious to relinquish their undertakings.

But Mr. M'Estimate found no diff-

culty in supplying their places. An advertisement in the London paper brought forward plenty of applicants and I felt happy in perceiving that the English had caught the enlightened spirit of their northern countrymen. The vacancies which had occurred were chiefly filled up with natives of the south, strongly recommended by M^r Estimate as men of judgment and experience.

My affairs at Bingwood being again settled, I had leisure to turn my attention to other matters. Little difference had taken place in the mode of living which Charles had adopted. The Scotchmen among other causes had materially diminished my means of supplying him, but some how or other he contrived to pursue his career of extravagance. I imagine that where he failed with the Gentiles he succeeded with the Jews. At all events, I could discover little alteration in him

but perhaps, that was occasioned by my seeing him so seldom. He did not often trouble me with his company, unless he had reason to think that I had money at command, and he was aware that I should willingly furnish him to the extent of my power.

With Lady Erpingham matters had assumed a more important aspect. Poverty was making rapid strides, in demolishing her Ladyship's comforts, for in consequence of the great increase of taxation and the advanced prices of all the necessaries of life, the Erpingham estates proved insufficient to support her establishment in its pristine grandeur and dignity. This defalcation in the ways and means was succeeded by the actual dismissal of a scullion, an under house maid, and a stable boy.

I well knew how deeply her Ladyship's pride would be hurt by this dire necessity, and therefore, consider-

ed that it would be a most favourable opportunity of inducing her for her own sake (which by the bye was the only effectual inducement), to effect upon the Erpingham estates, of which her trustees had obtained the actual possession, the same splendid improvements which I had just made upon the Bingwood property. The scruples, after complying with the terms of the settlement would be my own, and again in the humour of castle building, I calculated what an immense accession it would be to my revenue after I had again raised her establishment to the stipulated quota.

With the usual ceremonies I was favoured with an interview. I gave a succinct account of my prospects at Bingwood,—regretted the dismissal of her Ladyship's domestics—hinted at what might be done at Erpingham—and talked of several additions which the Duchess of Kennet had made to

her state equipage, all which additions had, I told her, an imposing effect.

For the first time in her life I apprehend Lady Erpingham was under the influence of pleasurable sensations. She expressed herself in a way so entirely new to me, that for a time I even doubted the evidence of my own senses, for she thanked me for my attention. Her voice and manner carried with them such a bewitching air of tender regard that I thought her at the moment a most charming woman, and seriously blamed myself for not having studied her character at a more early period of our union.

We suddenly became extremely cordial. I was invited to breakfast the following morning with her ladyship, who in return paid me a visit to my study. Miss Toadeater was, or pretended to be, in raptures. In short, there never was a more happy family.

After the happy state had continued

a few days, during which I had repeatedly brought my grand design upon the *tapis*, it was agreed that her Ladyship should spend the ensuing autumn at Bingwood. This was an honour totally unexpected, but it was not the extent of my good fortune. Her Ladyship agreed that the success of my operations at Bingwood should govern her in the management of the other property. What rendered her condescension more remarkable was her neglecting to consult the august Mr. Frill upon the business.

To avoid the possibility of forfeiting her ladyship's good opinion I took especial care to keep clear of further intercourse. Of the success at Bingwood I could not entertain the smallest doubt. All that I had to do was to prevent any thing occurring which was likely to defeat the fabric I had so happily erected.

The winter and spring, as opposed

to the preceding season, had passed in comparative quietness. It was only at times disturbed by my son and his noisy companions. But this I quietly endured, and indeed encouraged as much as possible, rather than I should be said to have driven Charles from his home. At his extravagance I did not grumble, for I plainly foresaw that it would stand me hereafter in need if I required it. Of his sister I heard but little and saw still less. She was her own mistress and seemed not to have the least inclination to submit to control, particularly the control of her parents. As to the royal Flanagan he was a complete dead letter, and was apparently forgotten by every one.

Lady Caroline Flanagan had indeed completely outlived her mother's remembrance and my liking. She might have taken a voyage to Jericho and back without raising an emotion in either of our breasts, and whatever

respect Lady Erpingham might have entertained for the ancient sovereigns of Munster, she had no great regard for the King's Bench, however royal its title. As she could not think of her daughter without coupling her with the Captain her son-in-law, she wisely contrived to forget both. I inwardly acknowledged my obligation to the Captain's creditors, for confining a person who must infallibly have become a very serious plague to me, if he could have procured his liberty.

Lady Erpingham, according to her usual custom, spent the summer months at Brighton, but about the middle of September I met her by appointment in London, for the purpose of conducting her to the shades of Bingwood, but by a series of trifling delays it was almost the middle of October, and after the operations upon the new system had commenced before we could enter upon our journey.

during our progress I seemed placed upon the tender hooks of expectation, and was overwhelmed with anxiety to see the realization of my golden prospects. I omitted no act of attention towards Lady Erpingham—I tried to amuse her mind and to anticipate her wants, and I even went so far as to compliment Miss Toadeater upon the amiability of her looks. Charles, who accompanied us, to my great joy as well as surprize, managed to conduct himself with decency and propriety. In short, a person who had chanced to view us for the first time would have pronounced us a family of love and affection,

As we drove up to the Abbey I could not help regretting that I was not greeted as usual by my old hoary headed friends with their offspring and servants glowing with ruddy health and contentment. But the regret was chased away by the great prospect of gain.

My new tenants had entered u
their several occupations. Every t
before me presented an air of b
and activity. The fine rich past
were preparing to be loaded with go
crops of corn. The plough had
lowed the footsteps of the deer,
every part of the estate bore evi
proofs that the spirit of improve
had taken root upon my property.

Having previously written to
Bubbleby and the other clergyme
say that I should take upon mysel
payment of the titles and thus rei
the great cause of dissension bet
the pastor and his flock, I looked
ward to the extinction of all h
rending jealousies, and to seeing
around me joining in the commen
tion of an event which should resto
the country that rural felicity to w
it had been long a stranger.

When I had done the honours o
place to Lady Erpingham, and p



ed out to her its chief beauties, I left her ladyship to enjoy them as she thought proper, while I pursued my own plans of amusement. One morning, the fourth or fifth I think of my arrival, I had indulged myself after breakfast in a pleasing reverie and was making calculations as usual upon a datum that had no foundation but in my own brain; from this state of happiness I was roused by the entrance of Dr. Bubbleby. His congratulations upon my arrival were succeeded by his entering upon the subject of my letter to him respecting the taking the tithes upon myself. He said he had obeyed my commands, which were always laws with him, and in consequence of those commands he had not interfered with any of my tenants, either new or old. His tithe day was passed and he was anxious not only to come to an arrangement for the future but also to settle present arrears.

As my rent day was approaching there would I thought be little difficulty in satisfying the claims of the tenant.

“ I shall have, doctor, to pay half a years income. But on reflection it is only for the future that I have to arrange; my new tenants have just entered upon their farms.”

“ Excuse me, my Lord, a year became due at Michaelmas. It is your lordship’s letter dated in February last, in which you engage to take the tithes upon yourself.”

“ But I only meant to take them from Michaelmas.”

“ I have strictly adhered to your lordship’s instructions, and in consequence of it refrained from interference since the date of the letter.”

“ You must surely have known, doctor, that I could not intend to take the tithes till my new tenants entered upon their farms.”

pon their bargains. Besides, it is ill but half a year."

"I had no right, my lord, to question you lordship's conduct, it was my duty to follow your instructions."

"Well, well! the amount then I must get from the old tenants as well as I can. But it is still but half a year."

"Pardon me, my lord, the produce of that half year is very little short of the gross amount of the whole year."

"Well, doctor, reckoning your own way, for the next half year will make things equal. What do you expect to receive?"

"Three thousand pounds, my lord!"

"Three thousand devils!"

"Pounds, my lord, and I can venture to assure your lordship, that nothing but the high veneration and respect which I bear towards my noble patron would have induced me to name

a sum so much beneath the real value. My possessions here are transient, but my duty imperatively calls upon me to protect the interest of the church. My successor shall never attach that description of blame upon me, which I have but too just reason to affix to the memory of my predecessor, worthy as I am ready to allow him to have been in other respects."

"It was always considered, doctor, that Mr. Farren received a full fair value for the living. Six hundred a year was deemed an ample compensation for his rights."

"How the conscience of Mr. Farren, my lord, could rest satisfied with his gross misconduct in neglecting the interests, the vital interest of the profession which he had thought proper to embrace, I know not. My task has been indeed a difficult one and in doing my duty I have exposed myself to a degree of odium from which I

ght to have been free. With hard
ps, much litigation, and in the face
every opposition, I have managed
raise the income to nearly treble the
mer amount."

"And does not that satisfy you,
ctor?"

"My temporal wants, it does, my
rd, and amply too. But I am only
e steward of others; nay, I am the
e steward of your family. What
ble patronage will they hereafter
joy!"

"But the sum you have named,
ctor, I can never consent to pay.
is beyond the bounds of all reason."

"Your Lordship was always cheer-
l—always fond of lively amusement.
ime has lost its power with you;
id—"

"By God, Sir, I am serious."

"And so am I, my Lord. I troubled
our lordship with a visit this morning,
a order seriously to consider upon our

relative situation, and to offer your lordship my best advice under present circumstances. For your lordship's sake I regret that you did not ask my opinion before you consented to lease your estates free from tithes. As far as my humble experience extends, your lordship may command my services; and if I may venture to suggest the course of proceeding which seems to me most eligible for your Lordship, it is, that you agree to the proposals I have made, being satisfied that the more time I have for considering the value of the living, the greater will be my ideas of its real worth."

I instantly felt how deeply I had entangled myself. My cursed precipitancy had thrown me completely within the clutches of this wolf in sheep's clothing. If the alternative had been left to me, whether to submit to this most abominable imposition, or to send (were it in my power,) M'Estimate

and his farmers to the devil, I should have inevitably have preferred the latter. But there was no way left for me to escape. The doctor closed his part of the conference by disclaiming all idea of taking an advantage of the situation in which I had placed myself; nothing could be farther from his intention than pursuing a line of conduct, which he himself would be the first to say would be unhandsome. But this was so far from being the case, that he had, previous to my arrival at Bingwood, given notice to the different tenants, that he expected the sum of three thousand pounds would be made up among themselves.

To hold further intercourse with Dr. Bubbleby was impossible. I was completely within his power. I well knew the consequences which would arise to myself, from his unhinging all my agreements with my new tenants. In-

stead of one harpy to contend with, I should have fifty, and all of them having the example of the Doctor's rapacity before them.

To preserve myself from greater evils, I considered it most advisable to submit to his terms, agreeing to pay him three thousand a year, for twenty-one years. I calculated that by this unexpected blow, I had lost nearly two thousand a year, but still my gains were immense.

I had no claims upon the gratitude of the Doctor. On the contrary, I must have been an object of contempt with him, on giving him the living, in preference to bestowing it upon those who were justly entitled to it. I firmly believe that the injustice I was guilty of, upon this occasion, created more real uneasiness in my breast than any other action of my life. Nothing ever brought the Doctor casually in my

l, without his being accompanied
a train of ideas as revolting as
self. But to have him so painfully
ed upon me, as had just been the
, was more than I could well bear.

CHAP. IV.

A FERME ORNEE.

AFTER what has been already said of both Lady Erpingham and Doctor Bubbleby, it would be doubting the reader's penetration, if I thought it necessary to inform him, that the latter became a great favourite with the former. The Doctor's emptiness endeared him to her 'ladyship. There was sympathy between them. Kindred souls, they found consolation in their mutual vacuity.

But the habits of the Doctor's life

had given him an important advantage over the Countess. The Doctor had been the founder of his own fortune. His intercourse with the great had ingrafted a train of maxims upon his mind, to which he successfully resorted upon all occasions. Fortune, on the other hand, had pounced upon her ladyship, a full-grown unweildy personage. The Doctor was compelled, by necessity, to think how he should get on in the world ; Lady Erpingham had no occasion to think at all ; and I will do her the justice to say, that she never trod unbidden in the regions of reflection. In character, I apprehend the Countess bore a strong similarity to many other patrons of the Doctor, (myself perhaps included,) who are incessantly in the practice of mistaking sound for sense, and subserviency for friendship.

Grandeur was now the Doctor's idol.

To have been descended from an ancient and honourable family would have been the height of his ambition, but, unfortunately, the records of his ancestors did not extend beyond the reign of King John. Peter de Bubblebee, as the name was then spelt, from whom he was lineally descended, was one of the barons who compelled that king to sign the Magna Charta. Nothing, however, could be traced of Peter's pedigree; but it was conjectured, that the family derived its origin from the union of a Roman general with the daughter of Theodorie, the Ostrogoth. Here the Doctor went rather too far; for her ladyship being totally ignorant that Theodoric was a kingly personage, the worthy Doctor reaped no advantage from his regal descent. Had he contented himself with Theodore, king of Corsica, the case would have been different, and he

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would have cut out the royal Flanagan hollow.

To amalgamate his manners with those of the Countess, the Doctor had contrived to dismiss his constitutional smile; and as I have seen him walk across the lawn towards the abbey, I could only compare his empty importance to that of an elderly goose at the head of a brood of goslings. His venerable grey hairs were dismissed, and his head was now surmounted with a cauliflower wig. This last change in his appearance was occasioned by his learning that Lady Erpingham always insisted upon that dignatorial appendage being hung upon the perieranium of her domestic chaplains. The Doctor was a most regular attendant at the levees of her ladyship, but he knew sufficient of my disposition to venture the acceptance of her

invitations to the dinner table. With Miss Toadeater he was a tremendous favourite; so much so, that had Mrs. Bubbleby been dead, I should have trembled for Lady Erpingham losing her companion.

The conduct of the Doctor in regard to his tithes, had by no means shaken the favorable opinion I still entertained of my new system. I only blamed my folly in becoming a prey to extortion. I felt that I ought, by this time, to have known the Doctor better than to have left any thing to be settled at an after-date, or placed the slightest dependence either upon his principles, or upon his ideas of justice. Coming from him, the demand of three thousand pounds was moderation itself, although it was at least double the most extended value of the living. But as my rental was trebled, I could

afford to make a partial sacrifice, particularly as I conceived some punishment due to me for my precipitation.

Anxious to watch the progress of the improvements, my mornings were usually employed in rambling about the estate ; and as an excuse for penetrating in every direction, without seeming to pry into what was going forward, I usually carried a gun on my shoulder. In this way I contrived to visit all my new tenants in succession, and took them at times when not expecting my appearance, they would be off their guard, and I should see them in their native simplicity. I cannot say that the picture which my northern friends presented was by any means inviting ; for whatever might be their management without doors, there was nothing very promising within. The farm-houses, which, under my old tenants, had looked like so many

cottages of content, cleanliness, and comfort, in the course of a few weeks, had been entirely disrobed of their neatness, and now vied with the pigstyes in filth and nastiness. The children were squalid and half-naked, and I could perceive little difference in appearance between the master and his labourer. If a preference could be given to either, it was certainly to the latter, who, although he had adopted a Scotch master, had not adopted Scotch manners.

In the midst of these disagreeable and disgusting scenes, my attention was pleasingly arrested by the sight of a farm-house, fitted up, not only with peculiar neatness, but with no small portion of elegance and taste. It was on one of my best farms. The present tenant had taken it in consequence of the public advertisement. He was, I understood, a gentleman of very con-

siderable agricultural ardour, who had resided some years in the metropolis. Whether or not he had tempered his agricultural ardor with agricultural experience, I had yet to learn.

I made my way to the house, which, as the door stood open, I was about to enter without ceremony, but my hat naturally left my head when a few paces in the inside of the door, I saw a middle-aged lady, attended by two well-looking young women, whom I was not deceived in supposing to be the good lady's daughters. The whole of the groupe were dressed in the first style of fashion. Had it not been for the green fields which surrounded me, I should have fancied myself still in London.

The contrast between what I had so lately seen, and what I now witnessed, placed the latter to the best advantage. I turned my eyes right and left when

I was ushered by the dame, and followed by her daughters, into the parlour. The room appeared to be superbly fitted up. A grand pianoforte graced one side of the apartment, and an Ottoman the other. The windows had been recently levelled with the floor, and opened to a small lawn, through a veranda in the act of being painted. On the whole, I thought it to be the most elegant *ferme ornée* I had ever seen.

I could not help expressing my astonishment at the amazing alteration which had been effected in the space of a few weeks, more especially as the predecessor of the present occupier, I well recollected to have no idea of elegance and comfort beyond a well-filled belly, and a pipe of tobacco.

“ Since Michaelmas, Madam,” said I, “ you have done wonders.”

“ Lord, my Lord, why we’ve been

t it these four months. Mr. Bergamotte paid Farmer Dobbins I don't know how much, for power to make the house fit to be lived in. Lord, if your Lordship had but seen what a pigstye it was when Mr. Bergamotte and I first came to it; you'd ha' been surprized indeed how anybody could have breathed here. But won't your Lordship take a seat, and a bit o' something to eat, and a glass of Madeira, or the like o' that. As your lordship's got your gun with you, perhaps you've been out long, and a little refreshment may not be amiss."

I accepted the proffered seat, but declined the proffered refreshment; however, Miss Matilda was sent out for it, and soon returned with a sandwich equipage, perfectly corresponding with the ornaments of the room.

To have refused availing myself of this act of civility and attention, would

have been a breach of good breeding. While I was eating a sandwich, and swallowing a glass of Madeira, the lady informed me that she expected Mr. Bergamotte to return every instant. He had merely gone into the home field, and as the ground was dirty, she was sure he would not go to a distance; and she hoped I would honour them so far as to await his return, in order that he might not lose so eligible an opportunity of paying his respects to me, which, she assured me, Mr. Bergamotte was extremely desirous of doing. I should find her husband, she added, quite different from the country clowns, and I should like him she was certain.

I bowed several times during the lady's speech. At the conclusion of it, I mumbled out some expressions of pleasure at having so truly eligible a tenant on my estate, and hoped that

so spirited an example would have a due effect.

“Aye, my Lord, we’ll show the people what’s what. If they follows our example there’ll be some spirit in the country—’twill be worth living in.”

“That, Madam, I can easily conceive; what has been already done is a proof of what might be expected from persons of taste and judgment.”

A most beneficent smile played upon the countenance of Mrs. Bergamotte; and, as far as looks could convey the feelings of the mind, the lady seemed disposed to make the most ample returns for my compliments.

“Why to be sure, we made the best of what we found here;” said the lady, “but really the place is so confined, that there’s no treating our friends as they ought to be treated. If one have’s

any body to dinner, why there's no drawing-room to take off the smell of the vittals. Mr. Bergamotte means, next spring, to build a sute of apartments fitting to his sitivation. Matilda, my dear, show his lordship the surveyor's plan."

While Miss Matilda went for the plan, I looked at the mother with a little more attention than was perhaps requisite. Probably the contrast between the fashion of her dress, and the vulgarity of her tongue, led me to fix my eyes more strongly than was strictly allowable in polite life. The lady blushed, and held down her head. She appeared to have taken a lesson from Mrs. Davenport, in her personification of a love-sick old maid.

The heat of the room had overcome her, and she was under the necessity of sending Miss Sophia for her

smelling-bottle, purtesting that the weather was more like July than October.

Mrs. Bergamotte might have been handsome in her time, and had certainly been accustomed to admiration. But much as old women were the rage, and highly as they were considered by the first-rate authorities of fashion, I candidly confess that I had no great inclination to lay the foundation of an intrigue in the present instance. Lady, Isabella Ainsworth had, perhaps, sickened me from pursuits of that description.

The entrance of Miss Matilda with the plan relieved me from the dreaded attack, which being unexpected, I should have been at a loss to parry, without giving offence. But before the plan could undergo a discussion, a gentleman opened the door of the par-

lour, and was presented to me as Mr. Bergainotte.

If I was astonished at the appearance of the ladies, I was no less so at that of the gentleman. He bore a much nearer resemblance to a modern beau than to an English farmer. But I had long known that the world was not to be judged by appearances.

Complaints have often been made by landlords, within my hearing, of the encroachments which the new race of farmers were continually making upon the gentry ; and I had here a complete proof of it. In lieu of the homely appearance of a farm-house, with the family indulging in the luxury of a chimney-corner hung with flitches of bacon, here was a parlour richly carpeted, and crowded with furniture of the most expensive description. The several articles appeared to be equally

costly with those which, in my days of early extravagance, I had adorned the town mansion, which had once been Lord Sniperhead's.

The farmer himself was as much dressed as his wife and daughters; and, although ostensibly employed on the business of his farm, was adorned for a state drawing-room. White silk stockings, and nankeen small-clothes, notwithstanding October was completely on the wane, covered the lower man, while the middle man was covered with a puce-coloured well-brushed coat; and the upper man was surmounted by a Brutus wig, manufactured in the first style of perfection.

I cannot say that I was *quite* satisfied at seeing a tenant approaching so near to terms of equality; but I comforted myself that his evident property would secure the rent, and his taste for agri-

cultural pursuits would improve farm. At all events, I considered by the effect of his example, the fi customs of my Scotch tenants m possibly be corrected.

CHAP. V.

RURAL ECONOMY.

THE elegance of Mr. Bergamotte's manners did not put his habiliments to blush. His advances were made with the most perfect ease and nonchance, as if he had been approaching an intimate friend. Indeed, his demeanour proved him to be thoroughly acquainted with the rules of civilized life. I could have fancied myself in Bond Street, and the person before me one of its most finished gentlemen. I rose up from my seat,

when the lady announced with much ceremony,

“ My Lord Erpingham, Mr. Bergamotte—”

“ Mr. Bergamotte, my Lord Erpingham—”

“ Your Lordship,” said the gentleman, “ does my humble roof the highest honour. Truly sorry that at the present moment, we cannot receive your Lordship in a style suitable to your Lordship’s rank. But every thing must have time, my Lord ; improvements are not completed in a day. Mrs. Bergamotte is impatience itself for the new saloon and drawing-room ; and seems to think that all my attention should be devoted to perfecting our new residence. But I tell her I have higher duties to perform. My farm, my Lord ; labourers will not do their work, unless they are properly attended to. Ploughing here, ditching there—

cows in one place, sheep in another. A life of action, my Lord, gives an appetite, and the open air stimulates exertions."

"Very true, Sir; the man of sense will always prefer the works of nature to those of art. The country is as much the region of health and content as the metropolis is of disease and misery."

"The country, my Lord, is every thing your Lordship says. There is, however, one great drawback on a country life. London is, to be sure, dirty in wet weather, but then it's soon dry again; but here one can't walk in anything like pleasure, at this time of the year, without dirtying one's shoes, and sticking in the mud. If your Lordship will believe me, this is the third pair of shoes and stockings which I have put on since breakfast, besides my morning dress; and really

these are a shame to be seen, and yet I did not go ten yards out of the regular footway. Since I have entered upon my farm, the ground has been so dirty, that I have only been able to go over it once."

As I could not compliment Mr. Bergamotte upon the management of his farm, I took hold of the only part where praise could be bestowed, without giving utterance to a palpable falsehood. I expressed myself, therefore, highly pleased with the appearance of the house, which I thought was, even at present, replete with every comfort. Mrs. Bergamotte, however, like a true farmer's wife, took to herself all the honour and credit of the domestic arrangements. She considered it to be her post to make a suitable reply.

"Dear me, my Lord," cried the dame, "if you had but a seen it before I came down. All the dirty places

within sight, as if they'd been put there on purpose to poison people. The pigstye there, where the pheasantry stands, and the cow-house, just upon the ha! ha! One could'nt look out of window without being turned quite sick."

The lady made a pause, for no other reason, than because she wanted breath to proceed. Mr. Bergamotte seized upon the vacancy, and took up the discourse.

"Farming, my Lord, is the occupation for the man of sense. There's scope for his genius—there's scope for his soul, let his soul be as comprehensive as that of the great Newton himself."

Mrs. Bergamotte had now recovered her wind, and was prepared for a fresh start. Cutting short the lecture on philosophy, which Mr. Bergamotte had just commenced, she proceeded——

"Aye, my Lord; who can withstand

the charms of a country life. Who'd be stewed up where they can't get a mouthful of fresh air for the life of them. And then the poisonous milk in London. Will your Lordship step and see *my* dairy."

Not knowing what Mrs. Bergamotte's dairy might produce, I most respectfully declined the invitation upon the plea of hurry. My time, I said, was limited; the next time I had the pleasure of seeing her I hoped to be possessed of more leisure. I ventured to observe, however, that it was a fortunate circumstance to the world at large, that such a variety of tastes were to be found. Any place, however dissonant to the inclinations of one, would be occupied by another, whose ideas and feelings were of a different description.

"But a town life, my Lord," continued Mrs. Bergamotte, "can only

be tolerated by those who have never been so fortunate as to taste the charms of the country. How delightful to be cultivated understanding to watch the seasons as they pass. To see the growing spring, bursting, as Pope says, into birth, followed by the ripening summer. And then to see the summer succeeded by the golden autumn. To receive, as we have just been doing, the richest gifts from the bounteous and beneficent hand of nature. Did you ever read St. Pierre, my Lord?"

I was planet struck. But as it was necessary that I should answer the lady's question, after some little hesitation, which I intended should be taken for a reflective pause to consider whether I had read the works of the author in question or not, I replied in the negative. This was strictly true, for being ignorant even of his name, it

was not likely that I should have perused his book.

“ Charming author, my Lord ; we’ll send it to the abbey this afternoon. Your Lordship will be delighted with him. But as I was saying of Nature, and now when she has emptied her store, and when, as the poet says,

“ The western sun withdraws the shortened day ;
And humid evening, gliding o’er the sky
In her chill progress, to the ground condensed
The vapours throws.”

Perfectly satisfied with Mrs. Bergamotte’s account of the operations of Nature, I addressed myself to her husband the first moment I could decently detach my attention from her mellifluous language. I observed to Mr. Bergamotte that I thought his dress, convenient as it certainly was, rather too slight for the season his good lady

had just been describing, and not only for that, but for his occupation likewise.

“ See the hardy village swain,” said the white silk stocking farmer, “ view those sinews, which the open air has so strongly knitted, and let those blush for their folly who pay regard to atmospheric changes.”

I began to doubt whether I was wandering in the regions of philosophy or rambling in the wilds of Parnassus. I was certainly not in an English farmhouse. Mr. Bergamotte continued,

“ It is astonishing, my lord, in a free country like our own, where every branch of science is so laboriously cultivated, and so eagerly pursued, that agriculture, the noblest of all,—the true and only source of our wealth, let our politicians say what they will,—the very ground-work of our existence, should be so dreadfully neglect-

ed. Look to the able writings of that most transcendant genius Mr. Old. See to what perfection agriculture may be brought. A hundred thousand pounds to be made in twenty years out of a mere trifle, only by improving land that's good for nothing. See my Lord.—Liming so much—Turnips yield so much. There's the sum total, and I defy any man to say that there is an incorrect figure from the beginning to the end of the calculation."

"But pray, Mr. Bergamotte, will you allow me to ask if the datum upon which those calculations are founded, are as correctly formed as the calculations themselves?"

"Most assuredly, my Lord, nothing can possibly be clearer. It is as self-evident as that black is black, and white, white. It would be a downright insult upon a man of Mr. Old's eminence in every thing that relates to

the rural economy of the country, to suppose for an instant that he could be mistaken in any of his propositions. Besides there is the never-enough-to-be-praised works of Mr. M'Estimate. Here my Lord——”

Mr. Bergamotte paused for an instant while he stepped across the room to a small book-case, and took down a book most superbly bound in green morocco. Laying open a coloured engraving upon the table, he went on,

——“ Here, my Lord, is where-withal to enlarge the ideas. Cast your eyes to this view of the farm-yard from the house. Here's the house from the farm-yard. And then here's the farm-yard again from the hill. And see, my Lord, here's the plan of the farm-yard itself. Finest thing in the world. Every thing complete. Threshing mills worked by water, when there's

any water to work them. And all the out-buildings in papers ——.”

Mrs. Bergamotte pulled her husband by the tail of his coat, and regarded him with a severe frown.

“ —— I mean pasteboard, my Lord. Finest covering in the world. Economical to a degree. Save a thousand pounds in no time. Nothing, my Lord, like economy. I gave this morning five hundred and thirty-three pounds, seventeen shillings for a Merino ram. That's farming with spirit, my Lord. You will see nothing grovelling, mean, or contracted in my system.”

I declared myself highly pleased at my good fortune in having a tenant of such a comprehensive turn. Then declining to partake of a fresh set of refreshments with which the table had been completely loaded by the young ladies during the conversation, I rose and took my leave.

I hardly knew what conclusion to draw from the strange jumble I had heard, but I thought that an exhibition of so gentlemanly a tenant, would have a good effect upon Lady Erpingham; and perhaps induce her at once to agree to my commencing similar proceedings on the Erpingham property. I could not for a moment doubt, that Mr. Bergamotte's quackery far outweighed his science, but Lady Erpingham was not capable of detecting his ignorance, and as his appearance was in his favour, a sight of him was calculated to make a favourable impression.

I therefore made up my mind to invite him to the abbey. It was a compliment, which I considered to be due to a personage of his respectability, and as he was of a description wholly different from the rest of the tenants, the invitation was not likely to create

any unpleasant jealousy with the other farmers.

I was perfectly aware that Lady Erpingham would think herself insulted by my proposing to admit any tenant to my table, let his respectability be what it would, but I led myself to believe that his manners would lift him above any such suspicion. But when he had taken his departure, and had impressed her Ladyship with favourable ideas of him, which I did not entertain the slightest doubt would be the case, I could then more forcibly point out the vast superiority of my new system, producing Mr. Bergamotte as a case in point, and shewing that one of the effects of the improvement would be, that a farmer in future would become an ornament to a drawing-room, instead of being a disgrace to the worst sitting room in the house. It struck me that although Mr. Berga-

motte made more noise, he was in reality as empty as her Ladyship, and as her Ladyship was wholly ignorant of every branch of every subject in general, and of agriculture in particular, the bombastic nonsense to which I foresaw Mr. Bergamotte would give utterance, would pass for sterling sense and sound experience.

On my return to the abbey, I found Lady Erpingham on the point of taking her morning airing. She was viewing the horses with peculiar satisfaction, and observed that for the first time for several months they looked as they ought to do. I handed her Ladyship and Miss Toadeater into the carriage, and making them a most profound bow, I went into the house, where I soon discovered the cause of her Ladyship's agreeable looks. Her establishment, as far the stable went, was again complete, a stable boy having been

hired that very morning. It must be allowed that her Ladyship's eye sight was remarkable keen to perceive a difference in her horses, of which no one else could possibly be aware. On that account it might be imagined that I ran a great hazard in exposing Mr-Bergamotte to her Ladyship's penetration.

But I was not dismayed, and considered the accession of the stable boy a most fortunate circumstance, in as much as it had promoted her Ladyship's good humour. To mend the matter there was still the scullion, and under house maid, as *corps de reserve* in case the stable boy should fail before my ends had been accomplished.

That I might not lose the advantages of the present happy conjuncture, I immediately dispatched a servant with a note to Mr. Bergamotte, requesting the *honour* of his company

inner. That done, I went to my
ly, and entered into a series of
ulations upon the additional in-
e which the Erpingham estates
ld unquestionably afford me. I
red upon the affair as certain, not
ertaining the slightest idea of dis-
ointment.

CHAP. VI.

A NEW SYSTEM.

I HAD not arrived at the full extent of my anticipations, when I was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who informed me that one of my old tenants that had been recently turned out of his farm, was desirous of seeing me. As I had shown that confidence in such as had left their homes, as not to require the payment of the rent before the usual time, I supposed that one of them had conscientiously sought me for the purpose of clearing

his arrears, which according to the system I had pursued from the time of my first coming into possession of the states, of leaving half a year on hand, amounted to a year's rent.

A grey headed venerable patriarch entered the room. He seemed care worn and desponding. Age, I always understood, to be attended with at least one good effect, namely, that of mellowing the feelings against the vicissitudes of life, and thus taking off the keen edge of sorrow. In this instance it appeared to have failed. I looked towards him, and drew an involuntary sigh, when I perceived that a tear was trickling down his furrowed cheek. His feelings were not of the melting order, which made the strong expression of grief that marked his countenance the more strikingly forcible. Some faces seemed to be formed for the purpose of conveying to the be-

holders an idea of unhappiness, but this was not one of them; the lines were harsh, and did not appear likely to yield their stubborn tension to a slight cause.

After I had looked at him for some few moments, I requested to know what was the occasion of my then seeing him. He was silent, but the convulsion of the muscles of his face plainly showed, that his inward agitation was too powerful to suffer him to give utterance to the feelings which oppressed him. At last his efforts to speak were successful.

“My Lord,” said he, “I have paid rent to your, and your family for forty years. My father, and his father before him were born upon your estate, and toiled there from their boyhood till nature compelled them to desist.”

“Well, my good friend, and what of that? Your case is not by any means

gular. Situations have frequently descended from father to son, till an estate of right is acquired. There have been many cases of this description, none within my own knowledge; and I declare that I consider equally indubitable, where a long continued occupation has disabled the tenant from duly appreciating its value. Of what do you complain?

"Of ruin! I have worked hard—I have paid every man his due—I have brought up a numerous family, and I am bold to say that I have claims on your Lordship."

"Claims! What claims can you possibly have upon me? On the contrary, if claims do exist on either side, they are most assuredly on mine. I am not aware of the particular farm you occupied. You say that you have enjoyed it for forty years, consequently for that long period you have been

in the possession of important advantages. Your rent has been immoderately low, and if you have not made a proper use of your good fortune, it is your fault and not mine. You refused like the rest of those who, bigotted to their former prejudices, refused to adopt plans which must infallibly have been equally beneficial both to you and myself. The rent which you paid bore no proportion to what is now given, and which surely you, who were acquainted with the soil, could have afforded better than any other person. It is the narrowness of your ideas that has driven you from a situation. I am sorry for you, and indeed, should feel regret that the folly of any individual, whether I had ever been connected with him or not, should place him in a similar condition. You doubtless thought that you were acting for

the best, and therefore quitted your farm——”

“To make room for a London barber!”

“Of whom are you speaking?”

“Of Bergamotte, my successor.”

“Did *you* occupy his farm?”

As I asked the last question my blood rushed up in my face. The abrupt entry of the barber into the train of my ideas, set them all in confusion. Although I only half listened to the farmer, I can pretty well remember that he went on nearly as follows, delivering his words in a decided, manly, tone.

“On that farm, I became the prey of your former steward. I had given him some trifling cause for taking offence, and he never forgave me. He declared, indeed, that he would be my ruin, and though that was not completed in his time, he too surely laid

the foundation. My rent was continually raised, while the rest of the farms were not touched, and every means was used to distress me. I often tried to complain to your Lordship, but you would listen to nothing. But this is not all. My misery was not yet sufficient. My son, the staff of my age, and now the chief support of my existence. My son, on whose labour I can alone depend, has fallen a sacrifice to ——.”

“ —— A London barber,” said I to myself aloud, “Heavens, what can I say to Lady Erpingham, if ever she discovers it.”

“Tell her,” continued he, “how her son has injured the innocent, tell her——”

“Of whom are you speaking, my good friend?” said I, half recollecting myself.

“Of Lady Erpingham. Of the mother of your son.”

The barber had taken such a firm possession of my mind, that I could hear no farther. I dreaded that all my well arranged plans with Lady Erpingham would be entirely defeated, and that this cursed barber would spoil every thing. It would be no service to forbid his coming, as independent of such a course being degrading to me as a gentleman, the discovery of the barber tenant would, I fear, make its way to Lady Erpingham by some means or other. So that at any rate I was apprehensive that this hero of powder and pomatum would mar my projects.

It was useless my talking to the old man, when I was wholly incapable of listening to what he was saying. I desired him to call to-morrow, when I would hear what grievances he had

to allege, but that he must excuse me now.

“To-morrow, my Lord, will be too late. It must be now.”

“*Must* be now,” said I, as my passion rose. “*Must* be now,” I repeated as I rung the bell. A servant entered, and I ordered him to show the old man to the door.

The old man cast upon me a look of anger mingled with contempt, and then left the room, hoping that my cruelty would be properly recompensed either in this world, or in the next; *an* that *my* son would be as great a curse to me, as his had been, as yet, a blessing to him.

Happy is he, who has no stings upon his conscience, and no regrets for having left undone those things which he ought to have done. But in what street does such a man live? In all the virtues and vices there is, however,

graduated scale by which a man is
to measure his own actions, and to
gulate his own passions. Acuteness
feelings must in all cases be regulat-
by the quantum of sensibility, and
re no one can estimate what that
quantum is in another, nor can he
actly judge of what portion he him-
lf is in possession. That I did not
ten to the old man I have sincerely
mented, whenever the subject has
me across my mind, but I will not
uch that it made so much impres-
on upon me, as it might upon many
bers whose virtues and vices were
on a par with mine. Whether it
as the effect of disappointment, or
hether it was the result of natural
orbidity, I will not pretend to deter-
me, but the fact was, that I led my-
lf to consider all past mishaps as
remediable, and discarded them as
on as possible from my thoughts.

I could have wished this affair to have been otherwise. I learnt when it was too late, that the old man's son had offended Lord Winterbourne, by declining to part with a favourite dog. Charles was bent upon having the dog, and was not nice in his means of obtaining it. In revenge for the refusal, and to obtain that possession, the monster, for such in this case I must call him, had suborned some of his servants, and had procured the poor youth to be seized under a warrant, on the very day in which the old man made his appeal to my justice. Upon oath he was committed for poaching, and left to his choice of imprisonment or of entering into a condemned regiment. I affected to believe that the farmer's son was guilty, but circumstances too plainly proved him to be innocent. He chose the imprisonment, and became an inmate

of the county gaol, the companion of felons and of some of the vilest characters which the kingdom could produce.

To have endeavoured to have repaired the injustice when it had been once committed, would not only oblige me to acknowledge myself in the wrong, but would have dreadfully exposed the character of Charles. Bad as I felt it to be, I was by no means anxious that all the world should entertain the same opinion of him with myself. But I looked with horror at the monster I was called upon to own as a son.

The poor farmer's son had borne an excellent character previous to his committal ; but habits contracted in the gaol soon dissipated his good qualities, and reduced him in reality to the state of moral degradation of which he had been suspected; thus giving a colour to the first accusation.

On his discharge from confinement, without friends or character, and without the means of earning a livelihood, the poor youth was compelled to adopt that course of life for which he had been unjustly punished. Driven to desperation, he closed a short career of infamy by the murder of a game-keeper, for which he and his associates were executed. The blood of this unhappy youth, I sometimes feel, *mau- gre* my general insensibility, will one day be required at my hands.

Shocked at the close of this tragedy, I endeavoured to impress upon the mind of Charles the consequences of what I termed his depravity. But my efforts were unavailing, his heart was callous, and he treated the whole business with a horrible levity, turning away from me and saying the fellow was born for a gallows or he would never have been hung.

But the barber was uppermost in my mind, and I must own that my ride was almost as much hurt at relieving my new associate at my table as I expected Lady Erpingham would be in case accident should make known to her ladyship his real quality. But as it would have been highly indecent to revoke the invitation, I therefore determined to await the chance, and take the consequences of the exposure. My courage failed me every five minutes, and it was with some difficulty that I screwed it up to the "sticking place" as the time of dinner drew near. I knew that the Marchioness of Haughtiford, Lady Erpingham's first cousin by the mother's side, notwithstanding she was almost as much encumbered with pride as the Countess, had entertained the Marquis's tailor at their magnificent country seat for a whole month, during

which Snip was noble in every thing but title. But then the Marquis was a little out at elbows and a great deal in Snip's debt. So much so, that without the invitation, the Marchioness would not have been enabled to have procured her state liveries for the ensuing winter campaign. But then again the Marchioness had none of the blood of the Vavasours in her veins.

CHAP. VII.***EASE AND ELEGANCE.***

WHILE I was ruminating upon the approaching dinner, an event occurred which was as unexpected as it was unpleasant. This was no other than the sudden entrance of my son-in-law Captain Flanagan. The Captain, presuming I suppose on his relationship, had saved the servants the trouble of announcing him, and burst upon me in all his native dignity, unlooked for and unwelcome. For a time he divided my attention with the *friseur*, and

had it been in my power to have got rid of one only, I should have been most undoubtedly at a loss to which the preference of ejection would have been given.

The worthy Captain had contrived to enter into a composition with his creditors, by which, for the present, he had obtained his liberty. By continual appeals to the good sense of those to whom he was indebted, he had prevailed upon them to agree with him in opinion, that so long as they thought proper to keep him in confinement he could do nothing towards the extinction of his obligations. But if his person was free from molestation he should be enabled to gain possession of his wife's person; her fortune would then follow as a matter of course, and could be appropriated to the use of his friends. Besides, if he should fail with his wife, there was a

see of getting something out of me, saying that my pride would oblige me to establish him as a gentleman.

I received this descendant of the ancient kings of Munster with the best title I could assume. He seated himself without ceremony in a chair directly opposite to that in which I was placed, and then told me that he had come all this way to seek out his betrayer of a wife, that had so undutifully suffered him to be cooped up so long, without coming near him at all, or sending him so much as a single thirteener, which, knowing how dearly he loved her, and seeing that he had no money to help himself, was a wicked thing. Here, he had married a baggage when he could have had Mrs. Graves, the tallow-chandler's widow, who loved him as never was loved before, and had moreover five thousand pounds to her fortune, besides a

well established shop and a roaring trade in Tooley-street. And after all to lose his hopes of preferment and to be tied up for life, for what chance could he have seeing that if any thing could have broken his wife's heart, it must have been broke long ago at the condition he had been in.

I declared my total ignorance of Lady Caroline Flanagan. With her proceedings I said I was wholly unacquainted, nor had I either seen or heard from her for a considerable time. She was now her own mistress, and I did not conceive myself entitled to interfere in the arrangements she thought proper to make for himself.

The Captain then requested to know where she was seen last, declaring his intention of following her to the end of the world, and beyond that.

I should have cared little where he

went so I had fairly got rid of him. His enquiries after his wife were succeeded by several questions relative to her fortune. I told him that I had no further information to give him upon that subject, beyond what he had already been made acquainted with at the time of his marriage. The money which I had been enabled to settle upon her, as he well knew, had been properly secured to her own exclusive use. She could now have no further claims upon me, neither did I think myself bound, as she had pleased herself in the choice of a husband, and had not thought it necessary to consult either her mother or myself upon such an important step, to interest myself more in her concerns.

The valiant son of Erin blustered and swore. I was the father of his honey, he said, or by Jasus I should know who he was and what he was made of. He despised her dirty fortune and her

mean connections, that did not know how to behave themselves to a real gentleman born. But that was no wonder seeing that they had no more gentility about them than would stay in an empty snuff-box, nor no more bowels of compassion than was to be found in a wig block.

He gave some further account of his wife's family, which I regret has escaped my memory, as the recital of it would have been a most decisive proof of my strict impartiality in telling my story. He concluded with begging the loan of ten guineas to enable him to pursue the hussy and bring her to reason.

A demand of that very moderate nature, notwithstanding it was made at the fag end of a speech by no means complimentary, I could not refuse, particularly as he had immediately before expressed his determination of not—

sleeping in a bed till he had found his rib.

He accompanied the last mentioned determination with so vehement an oath, that I really believed him to be in earnest, and under the impression that there was a probability almost amounting to certainty of getting rid of him so easily, I requested him to stay till the dinner hour when I would lead him to Lady Erpingham. I had a double motive for doing this, for I was in hopes that his royal blood would counterbalance the low origin of the barber, besides diverting her ladyship's attention from her other guest.

Soon after the ringing of the first bell I conducted the Captain, who had previously adorned his person as far as my wardrobe would allow him, to the drawing room. In a short time Lady Erpingham made her appearance. She received her son-in-law with her cus-

tomary composure, in return for which he paid his compliments to her ladyship and Miss Toadeater with his usual grace.

The privilege of paying compliments to women is an Irishman's birth right. It is seldom that he lets an opportunity pass of saying that which he well knows will gratify the "dear creatures." The son of Erin seems to consider that speaking a compliment is talking of love, and perhaps agrees with the Frenchman that talking of it is making it. At all events, had the Captain been a bachelor and Lady Erpingham a well furnished dowager, the former could not have displayed greater ardour in expressing his admiration of her ladyship's looks, which he was pleased to say, were charming as spring and glowing as summer. At the last word he hesitated.—Autumn I imagine, was at his tongue's end, but

the Captain judged rightly that Autumn would have conveyed a meaning, the least palatable of all, to every female who has arrived at what the law determines to be years of discretion.

His next adorations were on the point of being paid at the shrine of Miss Toadeater, when the announcement of Mr. Bergamotte saved him the trouble, for on the entrance of that gentleman every eye was directed towards him, to the total exclusion of every other object. This, by the bye, was not much to be wondered at, for the gentleman's figure and dress was by no means of a common description. He was bedizened from head to foot in the first style of fashionable elegance. Like an amateur of celebrity or rather notoriety, he had adorned his person with paste shoe-buckles, knee-buckles, and breast pin. His brutus wig was exchanged for a powdered peruke, and he was

altogether, as far as studied ornament could make him, a most superb figure.

I had requested permission to introduce a gentleman to the dinner table, who, although he had turned his attention to practical agriculture, had no one idea in common with a farmer. In this I chanced to be perfectly right. I had described him as a gentleman, but Lady Erpingham, who, I suppose, expected only to see a gentleman, and not a nobleman in his court dress, (for his coat was lined with white silk) regarded him with the same look which she had hitherto confined to nobility.

The fellow advanced to pay his respects with no small portion of easy assurance. I trembled when I saw him after making a circular bow, take a seat by the side of Miss Toadester. But he had been so long in the habits of intimacy with nobility, that he had contrived to banish every species of re-

straint. Indeed his manners appeared to sit so easily upon him, that I began to doubt whether it was the barber that had been instrumental in forming the nobleman, or the nobleman the barber.

Mr. Bergamotte soon found himself completely at home, for Miss Toadeater having casually mentioned the breaking of her scent bottle, he entered into a long and learned dissertation upon perfumes in general. It was wonderful, he said, that in a country like our own, where nature had been so bountiful, her precious gifts should be so shamefully neglected. But it was never too late to effect improvements. The world would soon be enlightened. For his own part he intended to manufacture all his own perfumes, and for that purpose had made up his mind to plant this autumn twenty acres with

rose trees, and as many with lavender.

Miss Toadeater requested to be informed whether he intended the whole of that quantity, which she supposed from his manner of speaking to be pretty considerable, for his own use.

“By no means, my dear madam, I am always at the service of my friends, among whom I have the honour of reckoning persons of the very first consequence in the country.”

Lady Erpingham expressed her surprise that she never had the honour of meeting him before, and hoped that if accident should call him to London in the course of the next winter she should have the pleasure of seeing him at Erpingham house.

“I shall be proud of the honour of serving your ladyship, and shall not now be backward in proving the high sense I entertain of your ladyship’s

condescension and kindness. Your Ladyship's orders shall be most punctually attended to. That I have never before had the felicity of receiving your ladyship's commands is a misfortune I have always deeply lamented. But your ladyship, unfortunately, was already engaged during my residence in the metropolis, and among such of us as consider ourselves of importance, we make it a point never to interfere with each other."

I remembered that Mrs. Bergamotte pulled her husband's coat on his mentioning his intention of putting his roofs on papers, and secretly wished that I had included her in the invitation, for I was thoroughly satisfied as things stood that he would infallibly discover the barber before the dinner was half over, if he did not do it before it was fairly commenced.

Her ladyship looked surprised at the

strange speech which the barber had just uttered, but as external objects made but little impression upon her mind, and as she was incapable of embracing two objects at once, she completely forgot its absurdity on the announcement of the dinner having been served.

With the most invincible assurance the barber started from his seat, and with a smirking air advanced towards Lady Erpingham requesting the honour of her ladyship's hand. Her ladyship with a most condescending smile granted the honour which the barber asked, while Captain Flanagan, whom the barber's loquacity had hitherto kept in the back ground, performed the same office to Miss Toadeater.

CHAP. VIII.**IMPUDENCE.**

THOUGH the barber had seized
out of honour in the drawing-room,
king upon himself the office of
Birmingham's conductor, she was
neat an admirer of the laws of
decence to permit him to usurp the
ty at the dinner-table, over the
nstant of royalty. Her ladyship
stalked to the place at the head
table, and instantly called upon
on of Mars to occupy the chair
her right hand. As Miss Toad-

eater supported her ladyship on the left, Mr. Bergamotte was consigned to a seat between the companion and myself.

The vacant cover immediately opposite the barber, was reserved for my son. As Charles seldom missed the only meal at which all the family assembled, without having informed me of the cause of his absence, I enquired of the servants the reason of his non-appearance. He had not been seen since the early part of the day; and one of the footmen told me, that he had heard Charles's groom say, that his young lord was first of all going upon some justicing business, of the nature of which the reader is already acquainted. From thence he was to proceed to ———, where he had engaged to fight his bull-dog against a butcher's mastiff for five guineas, play or pay.

Hurt as I had always been at the openness of his propensities, I now gave him up as incorrigible. But the recital of the son's exploits made not the slightest impression on his insensible mother. To his state of degradation he was perfectly indifferent; and I am satisfied it would have been of as little consequence to her, whether the heir of the family, and the descendant of the Vavasours, had been the first gentleman, or the lowest blackguard in the land, so long as her own establishment had remained untouched.

The dinner was proceeding with tolerable quietness; probably with much greater order and regularity than if Charles had been present. For a time stillness prevailed. No subject was started that could afford a field for the barber's eloquence, which I was now satisfied would be mute upon every point not connected with his

London shop; or his new country occupation. One reason for Mr. Bergamotte's silence might be, his attentive observation of the company present, in order to shape his manners accordingly. But a sense of decorum formed no restraint upon Flanagan, who devoured every thing before him with a voracity, which clearly proved that the emptiness of his stomach had not in the least impaired his appetite.

Lady Bpingtonham had always professed to consider conversation at the dinner-table as a proof of ill breeding; and Miss Toadeater, who in her behaviour was her ladyship's polygraph, was equally unobtrusive by any display of her vocabulary powers; until she chanced to make an unlucky complaint of the sweet-oil being rank.

This opened the barber's mouth—
 “The tricks of the oil-merchants abroad,” he said, “were astonishing;

far beyond what a person, who did not know them, could possibly have supposed. In all my preparations, I take all possible pains to procure genuine oils; and yet, with all my penetration and discernment, the fruit of five-and-twenty years incessant study and laborious practice, I have been often deceived. In consequence of falling under the displeasure of a noble duke, about ten years ago, for sending him an article which he positively declared to be adulterated, I imported a considerable quantity on my own account; and once thought of undertaking a journey to Italy, for the purpose of establishing a connexion that could be thoroughly depended upon."

"Pray, Sir," said Miss Toadeater, who had observed upon the countenance of Lady Erpingham a look of surprize, mingled with curiosity, which she considered a sufficient authority to trans-

gress against the established silence—

“ Pray, Sir, are you so very great a consumer of oils ?”

“ I flatter myself, Madam, that no person in my line——”

“ Is it possible, Sir,” said Miss Toadeater, judging that Mr. Bergamotte was a farmer, and anxious to show her knowledge of the subject, “ that such an expensive thing can answer as a manure ?”

Lady Erpingham's forehead was screwed into a forbidding frown. The companion was tongue-tied ; but the barber was not so easily baulked.

“ Oh no, Ma'am ! there is only one way in which sweet oil can be properly applied. I was merely observing, that few used more than myself ; and yet I have received so many complaints, and so many people have expressed themselves disappointed in their expectations, that I have been quite out of

heart; and I know that several, for want of the real genuine article, have resorted to the use of the Russia and Macassar oils, which were no better, and if any thing worse, than the refuse of an oil shop.”

“ Why that’s the oil,” said the Captain, “ that makes the hair stick to the head, and keeps it black.”

The barber, with a look of contempt, was preparing to refute the Captain’s assertions, when he was stopped by the sudden entrance of my son, in a state of disgusting intoxication. Charles could with difficulty support himself, while, with the assistance of the chairs, and the occasional aid of the footmen’s arms, he staggered to his accustomed seat, which was opposite to that in which Bergamotte was placed.

The redoubtable barber rose from his chair, and made Charles a profound bow. Charles looked at him for a few seconds, with a vacant stare,

and then reached his hand across the table, with——

“D——n me, if this is not a high thing. How are you Bergy, my boy? Give us a shake of your fist, my hearty. Get my hair cut in style now—nobody here knows how to snip. But what to h——ll are you doing here, Bergy? Come down to shave dad, or make a new wig for mam, hey, Bergy? D——n me, this is something like enjoyment. No dining upon starch, and wearing a buckram shirt—all free and easy as it should be. Stay where you are, my lad. I’ll just step out of the room a moment. There’s a choice spirit without—I’ll bring him in, and we’ll have a jolly night of it.”

Charles went out of the room pretty much in the same manner that he had entered it. When his back was turned, Lady Erpingham cast one of her stately looks to the lower end of the table, which absolutely petrified me. My

yes dropped upon my plate, and I was visited by the same feelings which apprehend a man would naturally labour under, when momentarily expecting the awful sentence of condemnation from the mouth of an inexorable judge.

The absence of Charles was of no long continuance. He speedily returned, accompanied by a greasy fellow, in a butcher's working-dress, whom he lugged in by the collar of his coat.

“ Here, my lady,” said he, “ this is what may be called a proper genius. He's got something for a man to be proud of. His Marrowbone has beat my Trencher hollow ; and I'll be cursed if he is not the finest dog in the kingdom. I would have backed Trencher against the field before ; but, hang him, he had no chance with Marrowbone. Come, Calfskin, take your chair.

I told you that you should have the best the house afforded. Can't say though that we've much beauty to boast of in the parlour; (looking towards his mother, and her companion,) but there's some rare bouncing wenches in the kitchen, and we can come at them by and bye. And now here's a hundred for Marrowbone, which dad shall pay you down. I'd rather have Marrowbone than the finest race-horse in the world. I'll lay an even fifty he'll pin a bull with one of his fore-legs cut off."

"Pray, my lord," said the butcher, "let me go." "Indeed," said the fellow, looking most piteously towards me, "indeed, my lord, it is not my fault; I would not have intruded so for the world."

"Sit down, you snivelling puppy--don't you see we're all at home. Here bring him a bumper of brandy, to give

him some pluck. D—n him, he's as down in the mouth as if Marrowbone had been only second best. Drink it, you turnip, or, by the powers, I'll send your teeth down your throat upon the quick march."

The butcher swallowed the brandy. Charles then called for another chair to be placed by the side of himself, on which he forced Mr. Calfskin to sit down, to the evident confusion of the knight of the cleaver, who cast up his eyes to heaven in search of that relief, which there appeared no likelihood of his obtaining upon earth; for Charles still kept a firm possession of his prisoner, and did not show the smallest inclination to release him from his grasp.

While this distressing and almost distracting scene was going forwards, my eyes unconsciously wandered in search of something that would yield

me consolation; taking care, however, not to direct themselves towards Lady Erpingham, till every other prospect had failed. Miss Toadeater was fixed and motionless, her eyes stedfastly cast upon vacuity; her features ready to obey the signal of her superior, either to smile or to be indignant. Captain Flanagan had dropped his lower jaw, and stared with wild astonishment; but his eyes plainly showed his inclination to join in the fun, if he dared. As to Bergamotte, his features were as stationary as those of Miss Toadeater, and betrayed as much surprize as those of the noble Captain; but he differed from both, in being apparently glued to the back of the chair, and in having his mouth extended from ear to ear, in a settled but unmeaning grin.

At last, I fearfully cast my orbs of vision,—this term I make use of, not from any poetical ideas, but simply be-

cause I have been under the necessity of so often pressing "eyes" into my service, within the last half hour;—I cast my orbs of vision, then, towards Lady Erpingham, and plainly perceived that her breast was swelling with indignation.

I was no less angry than her ladyship, although my vexation arose from a different source, for I saw that my plans would be effectually destroyed. It was my duty, as the *ostensible* head of my family, to resent such a course of proceedings on the part of my son; and I sternly asked him how he dared to insult his mother and myself, by such outrageous conduct. I further insisted upon his immediately retiring, until his brain was freed from the fumes of the liquor he had been so disgracefully drinking, and which had reduced him to the lowest state of degradation.

I was as bitter as possible in my expressions to Charles, from the faint hope that I might re-establish matters with Lady Erpingham. But my exhortation had no other effect than that of rendering bad worse.

“Insult, my Lord,” said Charles, starting from his chair, but without releasing the butcher—“if there is any insult in the case, it is on your part. On this occasion I seem to know better than your lordship, what is due to the united blood of the Vavasours and the Erpinghams. I only want to assort the company. If you expect me to sit down to dinner with my own barber, you cannot grumble at sitting down with your own butcher. Stand up for yourself, Calfskin. D——mme, if you a’nt as good, at any rate, as that pot of pomatum over the way.”

This was too much ; and the worst part of the business was, that the ob-

servation of Charles, as to mutual respectability, was founded in truth. Lady Erpingham had now just reason to be offended with both Charles and me; and if either of us was excusable, it certainly was not myself. Nothing, I was satisfied, would induce her ladyship to believe that it was not a premeditated insult on my part.

The Countess, at the first mention of the barber, had majestically risen from her seat, and marched towards the door. Miss Toadeater followed her example, and they both made their exit.

I went out after them, with the vain endeavour of pacifying her ladyship, and of protesting to her, that I was wholly unacquainted with the rank of the person whom I had ventured to bring to her table. I overtook her as she was about to enter her dressing-room which was always sacred from my un-

hallowed intrusion; but I could get nothing from her but a look of ineffable contempt, and the words, "This is your gentleman farmer. I give you joy, my lord, of your new system."

CHAP. IX.**CONVIVIALITY.**

IN despair, I returned to the dining-parlour, with the intention of closing this disgraceful scene of riot and confusion. But it required a stronger hand than mine to accomplish the task. I had not been out of the room more than ten minutes ; in that short time, however, Captain Flanagan had forgotten his royalty, the barber his gentility, the butcher his vulgarity, and my son—himself. A perfect amalgamation seemed to have suddenly taken

place of their respective powers, which tended to unite them in one social bond of conviviality. I left them in a state of seeming consternation, and prepared to be frightened at their own shadows; when I came back, I found that every particle of *mauvaise honte* had entirely vanished, to make way for good fellowship.

The dissertations upon bull-baiting and dog-fighting were elaborately entered into by Charles and the butcher, to the great delight of the Captain. The same amusements, which formed the delight of my son and his friend, were also congenial to the temperament of the Irishman. Whenever the proprietors of either Marrowbone or Trencher made an end of a tale, Flanagan had one ready to keep up the discourse. As to the barber, the subjects under discussion, as they were amusements perfectly consonant to the

new life he had adopted, the recital of a series of redoubtable combats, together with a detail of the merits of the respective dogs, as well those who had fought and vanquished, as those whose want of strength and valour had exposed them to be beaten, appeared to give him the highest satisfaction; although his previous ignorance did not enable him to mingle in the discourse, the greatest part of which must have been far above his comprehension. But he made all the amends in his power; and while he listened to the several narratives, gazed upon the orator for the time being, with a stupid stare of admiration and astonishment.

Had my mind been at ease, and had I been in almost any other circumstances than those in which I was actually placed, I should have enjoyed the scene before me, and entered into

the spirit of it. But in looking forward to the ruin it seemed likely to bring upon me, I could not view it with common patience. To melt butter in a cabbage net, which was a definition I once heard of nonsense, would not have been more difficult than to reason efficaciously with drunken men. I endeavoured to apply a few persuasions, but they were of no use. Correctives would only have irritated. Seeing that nothing could be done in restoring order, I wisely left disorder to work itself out.

I have frequently smiled when the recollection of the scene has come across my mind, and have regretted that my agitation deprived me of the power of impressing it more strongly upon my memory. An observer of nature, if he has no objection to view her in her homeliest garb, would have derived a considerable portion of

amusement from being a spectator of this strange assemblage; for, however propriety of behaviour, and a nice attention to the laws of good breeding may have been monopolized by the higher ranks of society, wit certainly prefers to exercise her playful talents among those less favoured by birth and fortune.

Angry as I was, it was with the utmost difficulty that I repressed a smile at what was passing before me. My son seemed to possess the art of uniting the most opposite characters, and had, in this instance, completely succeeded in forming a happy party out of the most discordant materials. I remained a spectator as long as I decently could; but a sense of what was due to my own character and dignity, compelled me to retreat, and I left the quartette in the full possession of their glee and of the dining-

room. In about two hours the whole party were conveyed to bed in a state of insensibility.

I well knew the effect which this unhappy business would have upon Lady Erpingham; and I despaired entirely of repossessing her with confidence in my improvements. I retired to rest in a state of considerable uneasiness; and neither my waking thoughts, nor my dreams, contributed towards the acquirement of tranquillity.

When I rose in the morning, I found that all my fears, though not my hopes, were in a fair way of being realized. Lady Erpingham had, on the overnight, given orders that preparations should be made for her departure from the abbey. Every thing was in a state of great forwardness before I had finished my breakfast; and the abbey from one end to the other, was agi-

lated with a bustle, corresponding to the vast magnitude of the undertaking.

Unwilling to trust to verbal messages, I wrote a note to Lady Erpingham, which contained a short exculpation of my conduct, and a request for a personal interview. An answer was returned in a similar manner from Miss Toadeater, in which her ladyship declined any personal communication, conscious that it would be an unnecessary waste of time to both parties.

I then, in the same way, desired to be favoured with a short conference with Miss Toadeater. This was kindly granted; and as the lady condescended to come to my study, I ventured to augur favorably of our meeting. Miss Toadeater heard my account of the unfortunate transaction, from beginning to end, with the most condescending attention, and without giving me the least interruption. But when I had

made an end of my defence of myself, she only confirmed what I had at first anticipated. Her ladyship's anger at the insult she had received, was not to be appeased; and whether I had been in fault or not, was of little consequence; for it was her fixed and unalterable determination, on no consideration to be exposed to a similar occurrence. With regard to my projected improvement, her ladyship expressed a hope that they would be successful; but Miss Toadeater, as the organ of course of her ladyship's opinions, appeared to entertain strong doubts of the beneficial result which I expected from my new system.

Thinking that Miss Toadeater would be pleased by my soliciting her advice and sentiments on the business, and when pleased might insensibly forward my cause, I requested to be made acquainted with the grounds of

her opinion. She knew nothing of the matter; but as she found the barber was one of the new operators upon my hands, there could be no hopes.

I endeavoured to make it mathematically clear to the comprehension of Miss Toadeater that the part was not the whole. To this, after some consideration, she assented. Encouraged by my essay in demonstration, I went on to prove that all men were not barbers, and that although the most complete system might fail in some of its subordinate parts, such failure could not be considered as an impeachment of the general principles, which general principles I could venture to assert had stood the never failing test of experience. Besides, I added, allowing Mr. Bergamotte to have been a barber, there was no proof of his incompetency to agricultural pursuits. In support of this last argument I ad-

duced several instances in which men had suddenly and intuitively attained the highest pitch of eminence in professions directly opposite to those in which they had been previously trained.

Miss Toadeater listened with a gravity becoming the prime minister of the Countess of Erpingham, and with a look of a person who wished to have it supposed that they understood the question under discussion. When I had made an end of my elaborate harangue the lady with more than her usual sweetness of manner, declared herself particularly sorry that it was utterly out of her power to enter upon the business with Lady Erpingham, her ladyship having positively forbidden her to speak upon the subject. Miss Toadeater, however, was pleased to say that my arguments were incontrovertible and must convince a scep-

ic. They had completely satisfied her mind as to the great eligibility of my plans, and she doubted not they would have the same powerful effect upon the mind of Mr. Frill, to whose decision all matters of business would in future be left, and in whose judgment Lady Erpingham entertained the most unbounded confidence.

Here, as far as the Erpingham estates were concerned, all my golden dreams vanished from before me, leaving not a wreck behind. The attempt at reasoning with Mr. Frill, could I even have submitted to the degradation, would only have been the waste of so many words, and the loss of so much time.

In the afternoon her ladyship commenced her journey, directing her steps towards the great city. Upon an understanding that I was not to

take the liberty of addressing her upon matters of business, I was permitted to assist her in mounting her carriage. When she and her companion were seated I pulled off my hat and received from both a gentle inclination of the head as the carriage drove from the door. Had it been any where else but at Bingwood I should most unquestionably have seen her ladyship at the devil before I would have put such a constraint upon my inclinations. But I looked upon Bingwood to be *my* peculiar residence, and upon Lady Erpingham as an invited guest. I resolved therefore, that her ladyship should not have it in her power to accuse me of neglecting the honours of my house.

The departure of Lady Erpingham, as it blighted my hopes in one quarter, enabled me to bestow an undivided

attention upon another. In one respect it was a lucky circumstance, for soon found the Bingwood estates capable of affording me an ample employment.

I must now dispose of my son's companions. The barber and the butcher had been early dispatched to their respective homes, both of them, I doubt not, thoroughly ashamed of what had passed. But the other plague seemed extremely loth to quit the good quarters into which fortune had been so kind as to throw him. The day had not passed before I painfully perceived that a great degree of intimacy was fast growing between the brothers-in-law, to which I would willingly have put an end had it been practicable.

Captain Flanagan in a short time became the companion of my son in all

his pursuits. Their congeniality of disposition had closely united them, and bid defiance to all my efforts for breaking the tie. All my attempts to dislodge this son of Mars, without resorting to actual force, which I was often more than half inclined to employ, proved abortive. Hints he did not chuse to take, and when I reminded him of his previous determination to seek his wife, he told me that he entertained such an immense regard for the whole family that he could not reconcile it to his conscience to be so cruel as to quit his brother-in-law, when his brother-in-law seemed so happy in his company.

The consequence of this conjunction of royalty with nobility was that my house became a den for the reception of blackguards of every description. The Captain was a complete adept in

cock-fighting and badger baiting, and by the accommodations which Charles from his situation could command, the most eminent professors of those elegant accomplishments were drawn towards Bingwood. My house presented one continued scene of riot and disorder, and had it not been for the hope of witnessing the realization of all my splendid improvements, my continuance there would have been insupportable.

Before I close the present chapter, I may as well just mention that at the appointed rent day I duly received the arrears from all of the tenants who had quitted their farms, with the exception of the old man whose son Charles had been the means of ruining. Most of my old friends seemed fat, sleek, and contented. Few of them had thought of placing themselves in fresh situations,

and several of them had the impudence to tell me that I should soon want them back again, and then it would be their turn.

CHAP. X.

TENDERNESS.

THE money collected together at rent day formed a pretty considerable sum, but the drawbacks upon it were enormous. Dr. Bubbleby visited me the following morning for the purpose, he said, of handing me a receipt for three thousand pounds on paying him that amount. This demand brought to my recollection that I ought to have received for the last years tithe of such of the tenants as had quitted. But it was too late. I

had, at their request, and to prevent further trouble, furnished them with receipts in full of all demands. I had nothing to do but to sit down quietly with my loss.

I had likewise a further drain, and that by no means a small one. Mr. M'Estimate had already prepared me for making sacrifices at the first starting of the new system. Before the alterations on the farming buildings were commenced, I had rendered myself responsible to the different workmen, it was therefore fair and reasonable that they should be supplied with money upon account. When to this source of expenditure I added the amount of debts incurred in London and at Bingwood since my last settlement with my creditors, the remainder was wholly inadequate to support the current expences of a winter in the metropolis.

Not having the means, therefore, of

pursuing my inclinations, I wisely followed the dictates of necessity, and resolved to pass the winter and spring at Bingwood. The same cause kept my son in a similar situation. But as country life presented so many more opportunities for the indulgence of his own propensities, than what the town could afford, no murmur escaped his lips. Captain Flanagan, his bosom friend and inseparable companion still honoured me with his company, and seemed to have intended that the lodgement which he had contrived to make should be permanent.

The Captain had always been a favourite with Charles, but he completely won his heart by the purchase of a bear from a travelling showman, which was regularly baited every Thursday afternoon in the riding house, to the great delight of the neighbouring blackguards of all ranks, and also to

such of their dogs as never had been honoured with one of bruin's close embraces.

As I had very little taste for field sports I had never maintained a hunting establishment, but Charles had of late laid me under pretty heavy contributions in the formation of a stud which he prided himself in being the best in the county. Both he and the Captain were never failing attendants at all the meetings of the ——— hunt, and both of them seemed to follow the chase with the greatest avidity. To this, and to such other rural amusements as came within the occupations of a gentleman, I gave every encouragement, partly because it kept them at a distance from me, and partly because I considered that although every fox-hunter was not a gentleman, yet that there were some gentlemen who were fox-hunters, and I thought there was a chance, although

a distant one, that Charles might chuse his intimate associates from among the latter description.

The monotony of my life was sometimes interrupted by fresh demands for buildings or roads, from some of my Scotch tenants, and occasionally relieved by the sporting friends of Charles. With the neighbouring gentry I have already remarked I had not been in the habits of intercourse, but such as were respectable, I now welcomed as my own friends. This I did with pleasure, as there were some among them whose example Charles might have followed with great advantage to himself.

These visits, it must be owned, however, were not without their inconveniences. I shall just mention one, not meaning it as a "sample for all the rest," but merely as the most remarkable which I can call to mind. One

fine clear frosty morning, when the hounds of the —— Hunt, as well as all the other hounds within the operation of the frost, were indulged with a holiday, Sir Timothy Sweepstakes, the principal subscriber, and occasional huntsman to the said —— Hunt, drove up to the door of the abbey, in his cur-ricule, accompanied by Lady Sweepstakes, who appeared fast approaching to the time of her accouchement. I happened to be in the hall as the carriage stopped, and went out to assist the lady in alighting. Whether it was my awkwardness, or the lady's carelessness, I cannot say, but her ladyship contrived to miss the footing as she descended, and before I could prevent the accident, had rolled upon the pavement. The consequences of this mishap was a premature labour. Her ladyship was immediately carried to bed, the doctor sent for, and every

thing done by the housekeeper which our situation would admit.

In a short time Sir Timothy was presented with a son and heir, and received our congratulations accordingly. The lady was *as well as could be expected*, but it was of course impossible to think of her being removed. Bingwood Abbey, then for the first time since my birth was converted into a nursery. But this was far from being the worst part of the story. The lady in the straw was incapable of giving me any trouble, but it necessarily followed, that I should be annoyed by the company of Sir Timothy, who was compelled by decency to pass a considerable portion of his time, in the same house in which his wife was so peculiarly circumstanced.

A week had scarcely elapsed since the delivery of Lady Sweepstakes, when my son thought proper to invite

his brother fox-hunters to dinner, or as the circular summons expressed it, to a jollification. This I apprehend was done in compliment to Sir Timothy, who, as the frost unfortunately continued, found the time hanging very heavily upon his hands at Bingwood, and was desirous of something in the shape of amusement.

The party was numerous and seemed inclined to "drink deep ere they departed." I remained at the table as long as I could, but was compelled to retire from it on perceiving that the whole of them were losing sight of common decency. Having given the necessary directions to the butler and house-keeper to take care of such as were found under the table in a state of beastly insensibility, I went to bed.

My first sleep was interrupted by a tremendous noise upon the staircase. In the apprehension that thieves had

again made their appearance, I put on my night-gown, and grasping a brace of loaded pistols sallied boldly forth to ascertain the cause. To my utter astonishment, I perceived Sir Timothy, my son, the captain, and others, aided by a score of grooms in different liveries, in the act of conveying one of the hunters, bound in such a way as to prevent his kicking, up stairs upon their shoulders.

On enquiring the reason of this strange proceeding, I was informed that Sir Timothy Sweepstakes had laid a bet with Lord Rasper of five hundred guineas, play or pay, that his pye-bald hunter should clear the bed, which contained Lady Sweepstakes and the child, at a standing leap without doing any damage to either.

It was in vain I remonstrated against such an act of cruelty. I had madmen to deal with who were deaf to all my

persuasions. I appealed to Sir Timothy as a husband, and a father, but it was preaching to the winds; Sir Timothy declaring that five hundred guineas was more than all the *dogs wives*, and brats in the kingdom were worth. As I could obtain no influence over the masters, I at least determined to exert my authority over their lacqueys, whom I commanded instantly to desist, and to retire to the stable upon pain of personal chastisement.

But my interference came too late. The horse was already at the head of the staircase, and one exertion more which the rascals made in pretending to obey my orders, safely landed him on even ground. Here the animal was untied, and in spite of my prayers and entreaties was led to the door of the chamber which contained the lady in the straw, and was ushered into the room.

Here a new obstacle presented itself. Sir Timothy had engaged that the horse should leap over the bed. He allowed the term "bed" comprehended the bedstead, but he denied that he ever meant that the tester of the bed, and the hanging, should continue in their place. Lord Rasper, on the other hand, insisted that the term *bed* included every thing as it stood at the time the bet was made. He agreed, however, that it was reasonable the curtains should be drawn back, seeing that they were articles of a moveable description, and the person lying in bed might suit their own fancy in having them open or closed.

The parties argued this knotty point with the greatest vehemence, and had it not been for the timely interference and salutary advice of Captain Flanagan, the argument would have infallibly proceeded from high words to

blows. The Captain, loth that the wager should be undecided, obtained a silence while he stated the leading points on both sides. These he contrived to balance with such equality, that it would have been difficult to have determined on which side his real opinion laid. He strenuously advised that an end should be put to all verbal disputes, and that the removal or non-removal of the tester should be decided by the dice-box.

This very equitable mode of settling the dispute was eagerly embraced by both sides. Sir Timothy and his Lordship accompanied by Flanagan went down into the dining-room to arrange this preliminary, leaving the rest of their friends to attend to the horse and the lady.

Fortune favoured Sir Timothy, and the tester of the bedstead was doomed to be removed. The lady during the

whole of these proceedings was in a state of agony difficult to be described, but easily to be conceived. But the dreadful state she was in did not make the slightest impression on the two legged brutes.

In a few minutes the tester was taken down, and the room cleared for the leap. At the leading of the horse to the bed-side the lady fainted, but all assistance was positively forbidden, Sir Timothy declaring that his wife was better as she was, than if she had her senses about her. In the latter case she might probably have frightened the horse by crying out.

At a signal from Sir Timothy, accompanied by a crack with his whip, the horse actually cleared the whole without touching the bed in the slightest degree, or doing any other damage, except destroying a magnificent toilet-table, and demolishing a superb look-

ing-glass, for which I had paid two hundred and fifty guineas.

Sir Timothy's shout of exultation, roused his wife, and he now permitted the attendants to give her the proper assistance. Hoping that she would soon be well, the *tender* husband hurried his friends back to the dining-room, that he might further expatiate upon the merits of his hunter, and receive the amount of his bet.

This miracle was succeeded by another more remarkable than the first, for Lady Sweepstakes actually recovered from the fright, and although she was for some days in the most imminent danger, she was able to receive her visitors at the usual time, and was in a condition to be removed with safety at the end of the month. Sir Timothy and his lady took their leave of me with many thanks for my kindness, and many apologies for the

trouble they had occasioned. Sir Timothy whispered in my ear at parting, that his wife was game to the back-bone. The worthy baronet, however, totally forget. both the toilet-table and the looking-glass.

This occurrence so thoroughly shocked me, that I positively forbid any more dinner parties of the same description. Although I was not apprehensive of a similar scene, yet I knew not, to what pitch of absurdity their madness would next drive them. At all events, I determined that my house should not be the theatre of such horrible excesses.

The remainder of the winter, and the first part of the spring were passed, so far as I was concerned, in dull uniformity. I took care that within doors every thing should be preserved in a tolerable quietness, and whenever, as was frequently the case, the Captain

and Charles were brought home from their drunken revels with no other signs of life about them than a capability of breathing, they were trundled to their rooms without ceremony, and suffered to remain there until sleep had restored their recollection, and enabled them again to plunge in riot and disorder.

It was with feelings of considerable regret that I saw the constitution of my son sinking under the continued round of debauchery, in which he lived, and from which it seemed beyond the power of man to wean him. Not that I entertained any sanguine expectations, that he would ever have been a credit either to me, or to himself, but there were many reasons which induced me to be desirous for the continuance of his existence, which was necessary to relieve me from my embarrassments. Besides my titles

d become extinct,—a family of high
uity, and unblemished reputation
d end with myself,—and the whole
y extensive possessions would
live upon distant branches, with
n I had never maintained the
test intercourse, and who, I well
r, had always viewed me with an
of jealousy, as the fatal obstacle,
h stood between them and their
s.

CHAP. XI.**EXPECTATION.**

MY spirits since the fatal departure of Lady Erpingham from Bingwood had been none of the best, but as the spring advanced they gradually improved, more from every passing day bringing me nearer the completion of my new system, than from any physical benefit from the genial season.

The rent day at last arrived, and I resolved to be my own receiver. The first of my tenants who made his appearance was Mr. Bergamotte, who

had carefully kept out of my way since the dinner party. Considering him as the cause of Lady Erpingham's displeasure, I cannot say that I viewed him with any extraordinary degree of complacency, but perhaps, I was more in fault than himself. The recollection of the past seemed to have had a similar effect upon him, for it had apparently deprived him of his consequential look, and he approached the table at which I was sitting surrounded with my official paraphernalia of account books and receipts, with all that grovelling humility of deportment to which he must have been early accustomed.

He handed me vouchers for the payment of taxes of every description, to an amount that staggered me. They had, he said, been all assessed upon his farm. He further told me, that his bills for the alterations in his house

and buildings had not yet been delivered in, but he should deduct them from the next half year's rent.

“Buildings!” said I, “surely you do not mean to charge me with all the foolish alterations you have made.”

“There have been no further alterations, my lord, than what were absolutely necessary for the suitable accommodation of Mrs. Bergamotte, my daughters and myself.”

“What the saloon, the drawing-room, the lawn, the virandas! You cannot imagine, Mr. Bergamotte, that I shall be such an idiot as to deem them necessary to the occupation of your farm.”

“Such, my lord, was my agreement with Mr. M'Estimate. The place, in the condition in which it appeared when we first saw it, was not habitable.”

“You took the farm, Mr. Berga-

motte, in the state it was formerly in. The house and the other buildings have been judged sufficient from generation to generation, and I shall never consent to make allowances for all the kickshaws which you and your foolish wife chuse to set up. I can certainly have no objection to your ornamenting the house as you please, but I have a most invincible objection that the costs and charges should be drawn from my pocket."

"On that point, my lord, the terms of the lease will decide. It is unnecessary at present to occupy your lordship's attention, as I now make no deduction on that score. In the meantime, your lordship will find this to be the balance of the present account between us."

"I counted the barber's money, and was on the whole satisfied. The rent after all the deductions were made,

was more than double the amount paid by the old man, who had complained to me of being ruined. The buildings once completed would put an end to further drawbacks upon that head, and if I was obliged to make the allowances for Mr. Bergamotte's alterations, I did not imagine that the sum would be very considerable; besides, the house was certainly an ornament to the estate. As far as the matter went, I augured well, for the Scotchmen not being incumbered with Mrs. Bergamotte's taste, could have no claims of the same description.

The next comer was one of my Scotch tenants, who told me that he was come according to the notice, but that he had little to say. As yet he had received nothing from his farm, and could not, therefore, be expected to pay rent. Such a thing in his own

country had never been heard of, for how was rent to be paid, but by the produce of the ground, and when did the ground bear a marketable crop in the beginning of May. He had paid some of the *cesses*, and should have to pay more, and he dared to say, when the accounts came to be settled after Michaelmas we should be about equal, for he should be at great expences this summer in making roads and other proper things for which I should have to make him a large allowance.

I have suffered so very severely from these northern locusts, that I am too much out of humour to attempt their dialect. Since my agricultural communication with them, the sound of a Scotch piper, the smell of Scotch snuff, and the high cheek bones of a Scotchman set me in a state of irritation almost equal to that of the Scotch fiddle. I shall therefore content my-

self with giving their sentiments in my own language, leaving the reader, particularly if he has participated in feelings like my own, to guess the rest.

The next that made his entrance was a fellow countryman to the last. He produced his accounts, by which it appeared that I was considerably in his debt. He had paid the rates and taxes—he had altered and improved the buildings, all of which he had covered with paper,—he had made a part of the roads for the occupation of his farm. He closed his statement by requesting the payment of the balance due to him, in order that he might be enabled to extend his improvements, and carry on his business.

I dismissed this claimant with a promise of enquiring into the justice of his demand and of settling it accordingly. I suggested to him the propriety of his not making further charges against me

of the same description. That, he answered, must depend on what he found to be necessary.

It is needless to enumerate the occurrences of the day. Suffice it to say, that from not one of my northern tenants did I receive a single farthing of rent. The excuses for non-payment were various, and the instance I have just mentioned was not the only one in which the landlord was brought in a debtor. I referred to the fatal clauses in the leases, and found that I had made myself answerable for every thing which the gentlemen thought proper to demand, whether it was reasonable or not.

From the farms which had been thrown up by the Scotchmen, and subsequently engaged by credulous Englishmen, who, like Bergamotte, had left their former occupations, and deserted the needle, the awl, and the

comb for the plough and the harrow, I received the balances which they allowed to be due. All these men must of course have diminished their capitals to make good their payments. On the whole my receipts were not very far short of what they had formerly been, but they were subject to the half yearly payment to Doctor Bubbleby of fifteen hundred pounds, and to the other clergymen, who were satisfied with receiving the same amount as formerly.

The result of my rent day was of a nature calculated to put me somewhat out of humour with my new system. But I still looked to better times. These heavy deductions, I was satisfied could not last for ever, and must in great measure be done away with before the expiration of the next half year.

I wrote an account of what had

passed to Mr. M'Estimate. I expressed myself greatly disappointed, particularly with my northern tenants. The surveyor, in reply to my letter, observed, "That it was impossible for tenants to pay such extraordinary high rents to their landlords, unless every facility was afforded them in their operations. It was necessary that they should be furnished with all possible means of abridging labour; and it was highly reasonable to expect that a total change of system could not be effected without some trifling inconveniences." He concluded by saying, "that the business, hitherto, had quite answered his expectations; and that I had been more fortunate than many of his other employers, some of whom had pursued the system with spirit for two years, and had not yet received a single half-penny."

Shortly after harvest, one of my

Scotchmen brought me a plan and specification for a threshing machine, to be worked by water. The cost, he said, would be only about eight hundred pounds. I referred to his former account, and found that he had already charged me for the erection of a machine to be worked by horses. I therefore refused to accede to his demand, alleging, in addition to its not being necessary, that the situation he had pointed out for the erection of the machine would not command water enough to set it in motion for above a month in the year.

He very coolly told me, that as I had refused to erect "such buildings as he required," he considered his lease as forfeited, and should throw it up. To this I did not make any great objection, as I felt assured that other tenants could be easily procured. I took no further notice of him; but the

next intelligence I heard was, that he had sold all his crops, and every thing that could be removed from the premises, and had decamped without the ceremony of taking leave, leaving me to pay for all the buildings and alterations he had made, and for which I had previously allowed.

I produced the rascal's accounts to the tradesmen, but they plainly convinced me that they had received nothing; and also proved to me that I was fully liable to their demands, as I had given directions that the tenants' orders might be complied with.

I again wrote to Mr. M'Estimate, who comforted me by saying, that there were rogues in all countries, and he was sorry to say, that Scotland was not entirely exempt from characters who were a disgrace to their fellow-citizens. He would see about getting me a new tenant immediately, and was

confident of succeeding. In the mean time, he requested the favour of an early settlement of his account, which he had taken the liberty of inclosing. Mr. M'Estimate was at Bingwood only four days, and his charge amounted to the very moderate sum of *thirteen hundred pounds*!!

These things served only as preludes to what I term my Scotch misfortunes. Captain Flanagan had become as necessary to my son as Villiers had been to myself. He led him by the nose in every thing; and in the quality of his *prochain ami*, obtained an injunction from the Lord Chancellor, to prevent my breaking up the park, and cutting down the timber, conformably to the recommendation of M'Estimate, and the agreement with the Scotchmen. This involved me in law-suits with the tenants, who reluctantly gave up their prospects of gain, by being prevented

from the immediate cultivation of an extensive tract of fresh broke land.

I was now reluctantly compelled to resort to legal advice and assistance. The opinion of council was obtained, and was so far against me, that I was induced to get rid of the tenants who had anything to do with the park, by permitting them to sell their property on the spot, and by giving them bonds for the payment to each of them, of a sum equal to a year's rent of their respective farms, at a twelvemonth's date.

By this time I had began to feel a considerable portion of disgust towards the new system, and to entertain strong suspicions of the expected advantages. I had already lost a sum equal to half a year's income, according to the old rental, and I began to fear that the next audit would not be much more productive.

When the hunting and shooting season finally closed, the country began to feel intolerably irksome, both to Charles and his *prochain ami*. The latter again talked of his wife, for whom his affection began to revive—at least in words. The Captain frequently heaved the tender sigh, and exclaimed against the hardheartedness of parents. As this was talking *at me*, and not *to me*, I did not think it worthy of notice; but as I was anxious to keep Charles in good humour, I agreed to pay a short visit to the metropolis, and accordingly wrote to apprise Lady Erpingham of our intention. Miss Toadeater, by her ladyship's commands, simply informed me, that our apartments would be prepared for our reception. I had given notice that the royal Flanagan would accompany us. But there was no welcome held out to him. However, as his presence was

not forbidden, we all agreed to construe silence into assent. This was the more reasonable interpretation, as both Lady Erpingham and her secretary were, on all occasions, so sparing of their words. I would willingly have transferred my residence to any other place; but circumstanced as I was, and continually reminded by the state of my pocket, of the absolute necessity of retrenchment and economy, I had no choice, and therefore drove directly to Erpingham House.

CHAP. XII.**(DISAPPOINTMENT.**

MY first step, on my arrival in London, was to send for Mr. M'Estimate. He came, and I explained to him the situation in which he had contrived to place me, and flatly accused him of betraying me into errors, which his experience in his profession must have enabled him to foresee. His countrymen, I told him, were a set of cormorants—they were never satisfied ; and if their ultimate improvements were effected_ at all, it would not be till

they had drawn every drop of blood in my veins.

As usual, I proceeded in a wrong course. I ought to have known, that to utter a word derogatory to any thing, be it what it may, that derived its origin from the other side of the Tweed, is an allowable cause for a Scotchman's indignation. If the foul fiend does not start within him at the time, it is only because the moment is not favourable for retaliation and revenge.

Mr. M'Estimate did not deign to make the least reply to the charges which I exhibited either against him or his countrymen, but preremptorily demanded the immediate settlement of his account ; at the same time declaring that he would not degrade himself nor his profession, by having any further concern with me. I might blunder on as I could, and if I ruined myself, it was my own fault, not his.

“ And this, Sir, you call an honourable mode of proceeding. You first lead me into errors, and then leave me to extricate myself as I can.”

“ Your lordship will excuse me, but we can have no further communication together, except in the payment of my demand, which, although I have no wish to offend your lordship, I must insist upon having immediately done.”

“ I can have no objection, Sir, to a fair remuneration; and care not how soon I get rid of such a scoundrel.”

“ Your lordship is pleased to compliment,” said the surveyor with a malicious grin.

“ Not in the least, Sir; I give the same unreserved opinion now of your conduct that I formerly did, when I entertained a favourable idea of your respectability and common honesty.”

“ Your lordship’s opinions are all of them so marked with judgment, that

it would be worse than sacrilege to dispute their correctness. But opinions, my lord, are not the current coin of this country. I must therefore again call your lordship's attention to my demand."

"I can have no objection to that, Sir, on your reducing it to a tenth part of its present amount."

"Not to be trifling any longer with your lordship, the demand I have made is according to the commission I have invariably charged. It is therefore impossible for me, my lord, to make the slightest deduction; and I advise your lordship, as a friend, to settle the business, to prevent any unpleasant consequences. I should be sorry to behave towards a nobleman in an unhandsome way; but I fear your lordship will compel me to act in a manner contrary to my inclinations."

I put an end to this conference by

ringing the bell, and ordering the servant to kick the rascal out of doors, an operation he literally performed.

The following day brought me a copy of a writ for the sum of thirteen hundred pounds, at the suit of Mr. Alexander M'Estimate, and a notice of action for the assault committed on his person by myself and servant.

I again took advice, and found myself in the wrong. I was told that both actions might be maintained; and that in all probability, he would recover very considerable damages for the assault, particularly as juries were apt to entertain some odd notions respecting aristocratical oppression.

My natural irascibility of temper was obliged to give way before dire necessity. By the advice of my lawyer, I paid five hundred pounds into court. This settled both the affairs, for I was never afterwards troubled upon either

case. In this way I have remained ignorant what portion of the five hundred pounds Mr. M'Estimate applied to the payment of his commission, and what portion to the kicks, which I will do the footman the justice to say, were most liberally bestowed upon his carcase.

I had led several persons to whom I had become indebted, to expect the discharge of their accounts from the proceeds of my last rent day. The result of that day had been far from enabling me to get rid of my obligations, and, as might naturally be expected, a considerable degree of impatience was shown. I was obliged to pacify them in the same way my father had formerly done, by urging the approaching end of my son's minority, for my hopes were by no means sanguine respecting the next audit.

Here I had a great advantage over my father. Charles's turn for extravagance could not be supplied, without his acting as I should direct him. I now made him privy to my intentions; and it was agreed between us, that the produce of the Bingwood estates should be released from the settlement; and the lands themselves, or their produce, if sold, equally divided between us.

Captain Flanagan materially assisted in the arrangements; for he had made up his mind to share Charles's half, and his creditors judged his prospects to be sufficiently promising to allow him a further time.

I have no occasion, during my present stay in town, to make any mention of Lady Erpingham, for I should only have to repeat what I have said before. I shall likewise pass over many trivial

incidents, and proceed at once to the close of all my golden dreams, so far as my new system was concerned.

My Michaelmas audit was not of a nature a whit more promising than that of the preceding Ladyday. Mr. Bergamotte, as before, was the first to make his appearance. He tendered me his accounts for his building improvements, including the new saloon and the drawing-room. It would have been useless to have made any objections to allowing them, seeing that I stood pledged to the payment; but experience has taught me the propriety of ascertaining, that these large sums had been actually paid to the different tradesmen before I admitted them as offsets against the rent.

The *ferme ornée* of Mr. Bergamotte, I will do both him and Mrs. Bergamotte the justice to say, was one of the most elegant *bijoux* I had ever beheld; but

I nevertheless thought it a little hard to be saddled with all the expences incurred in the formation of this little earthly paradise, which I was informed, was the appellation Mrs. Bergamotte bestowed upon it, just after every thing had been completed to her taste. But I had no remedy whatever against the allowance; the words in the lease were peremptory, and admitted of no qualification. I was to be at the expence of erecting whatever buildings the tenant might require; and had reserved to myself no right of interfering, either in matters of necessity, or in those of inclination. However, as the barber professed his intention of immediately paying the remainder of the rent, I consented that the whole should stand over till the ensuing rent day.

From some of my Scotch tenants, I now got a *little* towards the rent, but this I attributed in a great measure to

my having desired it might be expressly understood, that I should no longer submit to be trifled with.

Many of the tenants urged that the ensuing crop would be the first by which they could really benefit themselves under the new system, the former being only to be considered as a course preparatory to the improved husbandry. They would then be enabled to proceed with regularity and certainty. If I now urged them beyond what they could conveniently bear, their means would necessarily be cramped, and they would consequently be unable to fulfil their agreements.

Whatever appearance my new system *promised*, for I had promises enough, I saw on reflection, no reason to be dissatisfied with the interference of my son and Captain Flanagan, relative to the park. The letting it originally had gone much against the grain,

and had not M'Estimate incessantly urged me I never should have consented to the measure. The rascals who held it, and who contrived to make a prey of me on my inability to adhere to the covenants on my part, I sent to the devil, comforting myself that it was a "good riddance of bad rubbish."— I should indeed have forgotten them entirely had it not been for those cursed things called bonds, which I had given to free myself from their clutches, and which had now only a few months to elapse before they became due.

With considerable labour and expence, the sods which had been turned up were replaced as well as they could be in their former position. A fresh stock of deer were procured and the park in a short time began to resume its former appearance.

¶ The next rent day fully exposed the fallacy of my schemes for the improvement of my income, and left me more

involved than ever. At the invitation of Lady Erpingham I had attended her at *her* residence, for the Easter holidays, and did not get to Bingwood until within a week of the day appointed for receiving the rents.

The storm now broke upon me. Not one of my Scotch tenants were remaining. Every one of them had disposed of all their moveable effects. The produce of the last harvest, their cattle, furniture, and effects of every description were gone, and I had to take possession of a complete desert. Land exhausted by over-cultivation, and buildings, notwithstanding pretended repairs, in a state of delapidation, were every thing that remained to reimburse me for the loss of rent, and to meet the several demands for rates and taxes, which came pouring in upon me in all directions. The tradesmen remained unpaid, and my whole estate presented

one scene of ruin and desolation, sparingly interspersed with the marks of industry among a few of the old tenants whom it had not been in my power to disturb, and partially adorned with the glittering ornaments which Mr. Bergamotte had stuck up in every part of his farm.

The day preceding that on which the rents were to have been paid, I learnt that an execution, which had been long hanging over Mr. Bergamotte's head, had been put in force, and that all his property was placed at the disposal of the sheriff or his deputies. The upholsterer who had so superbly furnished this magnificent bijou, had been induced to trust his goods under the impression that Mr. Bergamotte had left off business with a fortune, which had been scraped out of pomatum and lavender, and had retired to spend the rest of his days in the

tranquil enjoyments of rural seclusion. The upholsterer had been put off from time to time with excuses, but as soon as he learnt the source from which his debtor expected to derive the means of satisfying the demand, he commenced those proceedings which led to the close of poor Bergamotte's agricultural career.

It was needless to stand upon further ceremony. Forbearance could be of no service to any one but the upholsterer. I therefore saved what I possibly could, and in my capacity of landlord distrained over every thing upon the farm to the entire supercession of the upholsterer's prior claim. The every thing, however, when exposed to the hammer went but a little way towards the extinction of the arrears of rent.

Poor Bergamotte, like myself, had become enamoured of the new system.

The great gains of the farmers had been so often commented upon in the public prints, and the enormous profits of farming under the improved system, had been so flamingly and so eloquently set forth in the publications of Mr. M'Estimate, that the whole soul of the poor barber and his wife was set upon a farm. In a farm how was it possible for them to fail in the rapid accumulation of a fortune? Did not many farmers now keep their carriages, drink their wine, and carry their heads as high or higher than the gentry? And how could all this be accomplished unless bank notes issued almost spontaneously from the land?

The sale of his stock of perfumery, wigs, and combs, together with the collection of his outstanding debts, had enabled the barber to scrape up a little money for his outset. Clear of the world, and with a few hundred pounds

in his pocket he had taken my farm at the recommendation of his *magnus Apollo*, Mr. M'Estimate, who knew as little of his real circumstances as the upholsterer, and instead of retiring into the country to enjoy a competency already procured, he was infatuated with the hope of gaining an ample fortune by a pursuit wholly strange to him, and for which he was in no respect whatever calculated.

I felt for the poor deluded man, but it was wholly out of my power to befriend him, had I been so inclined. There was a certain degree of sympathy between us. We had been equally the dupes of an empty conceited quack. Unlike the prudent who live within their means, poor Bergamotte and his family had lived up to their *expectations*, which were of the most sanguine description. While money or credit could be procured, his wife and daugh-

ters indulged in all the luxuries of life, and at the termination of his agricultural campaign, the poor man found himself several thousand pounds in debt. I sincerely pitied him, for the new system had not left me in a much better state, allowing for the great disproportion in our situations. My person was fortunately sacred, but poor Bergamotte made a rapid transition from his *ferme ornée* to the county gaol.

I was pleased that Lady Erpingham continued in ignorance of these unhappy transactions. Not that I apprehended I should have heard anything from her lips to have reminded me of my *gentleman farmer*, for, thanks to her insensibility, she was above all ill-natured illusions, but had she been aware of them, I could not have looked her in the face without seeing my own folly reflected in it.

The only monies I received were from my old tenants that held by lease, and from the sale of Bergamotte's effects. Nothing remained for me to do but to replace the estates as they were before the change. In this I succeeded; most of my old tenants, whom I had turned out of their farms, returned to them, reminding me that it was now *their turn*. I was even happy at the certainty of receiving the former rental subject however to a very large allowance in the first instance, for the very bad condition in which they had to retake the lands.

CHAP. XIII.

ARRANGEMENTS.

WHEN things, they say, are at the worst they will mend. Perhaps it was this idea which actuated me in looking around and calculating the extent of my obligations to Mr. M'Estimate. The result of my labours was the conviction that I had been a loser of rather more than eight and twenty thousand pounds in money, besides a depreciated property.

This I considered was quite sufficient, but the entrance of Dr. Bubbleby

reminded me that I had agreed to pay him annually the sum of three thousand pounds for the term of twenty-one years, while the utmost I could expect to receive for the tithes from the tenants would not exceed half that amount.

The doctor with his usual smile (for since Lady Erpingham's departure he had thrown off his wig and recovered his simper,) requested the payment of his tithes. He made many tender enquiries after the Countess, congratulated me on my appearance and hoped that my new system answered my expectations.

This was more than I could bear. The doctor must necessarily have known how I was circumstanced; his expression was therefore a deliberate insult. In my rage I cursed the doctor's hypocrisy and himself into the bargain.

“ You must well know,” added I, “ the

situation in which I have been placed by the knaves and fools which have swarmed about me. The delusion is now at an end, and the amount of my losses I am ashamed to mention. I entered into an agreement with you on the supposition that the plans of that scoundrel M'Estimate would enable me to fulfil it without injury to myself. Indeed you took an advantage of me, but you surely cannot expect a continuance of the payment when all hopes of success in the plan pursued have vanished."

"I inquire but little, my lord," replied the hypocrite, "into the affairs of other people. It is sufficient for me to attend to my own. Your lordship's success or failure in schemes with which I could have no sort of concern could be of no consequence to me, and had I even interfered in the slightest degree, your lordship might very justly

have accused me of presumption ; even though that interference might only have been given in the shape of advice. I am truly sorry that your lordship's schemes have been unsuccessful, but I should have made no complaint if your lordship had discovered that the tithes were worth double the sum which your lordship undertook to pay for them. Your lordship will always find me a man as incapable of receding from my word as I would from my bond, and I expect to find a similar disposition on the part of your lordship."

I told the doctor that as to money I had none, neither for him nor myself. But he begged to remind me that I had money's worth, and declared it to be his unalterable intention to abide by the terms of the agreement between us. Be that as it might, I told him, he must be contented to wait like other creditors ; unless he thought proper, which I

should consider the most advisable as well as the most *honest* plan for him to pursue, to cancel the agreement for the three thousand a year and again take the tithes upon himself.

The doctor did not seem the least inclined to do either. He declared his inability to wait. He was poor and could not afford it. His *little pittance* was as much to him, as a large income was to a nobleman like myself. Times were hard, distress was every where prevalent, and he was continually regretting that he had nothing to bestow towards the relief of the poor and helpless. Cancelling the agreement was a thing that he could not think of for a moment. Since I had taken the tithes upon myself he had lived with his flock as a shepherd. The quarrels between him and his parishoners had never ceased from his first entry into the parish till he came to terms with me.

But now the cause of contention was removed, every thing was harmony.

As I was not in a frame of mind to have any further squabbling with him, I requested, that I might be left to myself. His age was the protection of his person, or I hardly know what would have been the consequences. Death I feared was the only friend that could relieve me from the fangs of this merciless shark, and I felt myself somewhat comforted that in the journey of life the doctor had at least five and twenty years the start of me.

My son was now the only person to whom I could look for a freedom from embarrassment. In the ensuing spring his minority would cease. To that event I could alone look forward with any prospect of comfort or satisfaction. I made, indeed, one more attempt to engage the assistance of Lady Erpingham, by making her acquainted with

the difficulties I had to surmount. She listened to the tale as usual with the most steady composure, and without making the least reference to the miscarriage of my plans for the improvement of my property, but told me that it was impossible for her to pay attention to any affair of business except through the medium of Mr. Frill, from whom I should receive her answer to any specific proposition I thought fit to lay before him.

To see Mr. Frill upon the subject was out of the question. Before I parted from her ladyship, however, I managed to create a considerable degree of alarm upon her mind, by giving her to understand that an execution against myself would reach to the moveables which were not strictly heirloom, both at Erpingham and in the London house. This was striking at the very root of her ladyship's gran-

deur, and she now *requested* that I would explain the matter to Mr. Frill. On my positive refusal to have any communication whatever with Mr. Frill, her ladyship desired that time might be allowed her to consult with her friends, in order that she might take such steps as would avoid the threatened inconveniences.

The next morning I was honoured by a visit from the Duke of ———, the brother-in-law of Lady Erpingham. Our intercourse had been very confined, and as neither his Grace nor myself were much overburthened with small talk he came at once to the business of his errand.

He had waited on me, he said, in consequence of a consultation between his family and the Countess, and was sorry to hear from his sister-in-law, such an account of my embarrass-

ments. He should be extremely unwilling that any thing which could happen to me from my imprudence should disturb the establishment of Lady Erpingham. He had therefore made up his mind to offer me the full value of the furniture and moveables at both houses, as the amount should be settled by appraisers duly appointed. In addition to that he would take a lease of both houses for a definite time, or for the life of his sister-in-law if I chose it, paying the rent of the house in London to me, and the rent of the house and park at Erpingham to the Countess's trustees. In this way he should be able to accommodate her ladyship with both residences, and she would then be free from the apprehension of any unpleasant proceedings.

However grating such a proposition

was to my feelings, it had its uses and advantages. My adopting it would put me in possession of a considerable sum of ready money, which was necessary as well for my own wants as to keep Charles in good humour.

The business was settled as soon as the appraisers had delivered in their report, and the money was paid into the hands of my bankers. As my library, pictures, a large stock of wine in both places, the deer, her ladyship's horses and carriages, with a long train of *et ceteras*, were included in the inventory, the amount was very considerable, and set both Charles and myself at ease for the time that was to elapse before his minority ceased. I remember one reason of my agreeing to the arrangement, and even pressing its execution, took its rise from Dr. Bubbleby, who had brought an action against me upon the agreement, in

which in a few months he must have obtained a judgment. I was not a little pleased at disappointing his expectations; and thought that on his failing to obtain his money by foul means, he would be induced to cancel the agreement and get what he could by fair means. I considered the mode in which he had taken advantage of me, so truly unhandsome, and even rascally, that I was resolved to defeat him, and therefore prevailed upon the Duke to take a nominal transfer of my personal property at Bingwood into the bargain. His grace was to all intents and purposes a man of the strictest honour, notwithstanding in this instance he lent his sanction to what I know many persons would have deemed a palpable fraud; I could therefore place the most firm dependence that the trust would not be abused.

The Duke was no sooner in virtual

possession of the three places of residence, than the newspapers blazoned forth the fact, that his Grace of ——— had taken the town and country houses of the Earl of Erpingham on lease for twenty-one years, and had purchased all the furniture and effects preparatory to the marriage of his grace's eldest son with a young lady of distinguished rank and immense fortune.

In this way my creditors of every description were given to understand that all proceedings at law were useless, and that I was in a state to put them at defiance. They instantly became as submissive as they were before violent. Dr. Bubbleby put a stop to his action and wrote me a letter in which he protested that any thing which had occurred that I might consider unpleasant had been not only without his directions, but even without his knowledge; his attorney hav-

ing commenced proceedings simply upon his saying that he should like to be paid. He hoped I would acquit him from all blame in the transaction, and expressed his readiness *now* to cancel the agreement and give me a full discharge.

Here was an opportunity of serving my tenants by putting it out of the doctor's power to worry and harass them in future, for I am certain the doctor would have caught at any thing rather than lose every thing, which I was resolved he should do if he went on. But it was my fate never to take any measures which should be of real service to any one who deserved it. The consequences of my omission were, that Dr. Bubbleby became more oppressive than ever, assigning as a reason the losses he had sustained through me, and the necessity he was under of reimbursing himself by some means or other.

I could not but wonder at the ease, with which the Duke, whom I well knew had for years been almost as much distressed as myself, should suddenly have been enabled to come forward with the money. This enigma was however soon solved through the negligence of his grace's lawyer. The money was a *part* of her ladyship's savings. What the whole of Lady Erpingham's savings amounted to I can form no idea, but from circumstances which casually transpired a short time after, I had reason to believe that they were very considerable.

CHAP. XIV.**INSTABILITY.**

I MUST now carry my story a little back in order to balance my accounts with my daughter Lady Caroline Flanagan, and sorry am I that what I have to relate of her is far from being of a nature either satisfactory or consolatory.

On his first coming to town, the Captain earnestly sought after his wife, but when he learnt that there was no way whatever in which her fortune could be applied to his uses, he gave

himself no trouble respecting her person, but contentedly hung upon Charles as the most promising bargain of the two.

The residence of Caroline at Lady Littleworth's had drawn to the house of the dowager much idle company of both sexes. My daughter was really a fine woman, and had learnt from her *chaperone* the way of setting herself off to the best advantage. In this equivocal and irksome situation of a "widow bewitched," she remained for some time exposed to temptation, and to the assiduities and allurements of the myriad of empty fops that continually fluttered round her.

In a certain sphere of high life, a female may assume privileges which would be considered unbecoming with those of an inferior rank. Lady Caroline prided herself upon the number of her admirers, among whom she

reckoned the Honourable Charles Burford, a gentleman well known in the annals of gallantry and distinguished by the appellation of the "Lady Killer," and from what follows the title may be more apt than is perhaps commonly imagined.

The coquetry of Lady Caroline rendered her proof against the allurements of all her admirers, Mr. Burford excepted, who was far from being contented with remaining a cold blooded disciple of Plato. The consequence of this *friendship* between two persons in the prime of life and of the opposite sex, was extremely natural.—Lady Caroline was in a fair way of presenting her husband with a son and heir.

The rest I must hurry over.—By whom the fatal medicine which was to prevent exposure was administered, I could never satisfactorily ascertain.—There was a mystery and a murder.

ous mystery.—If it was given by the hand of the paramour, be it on his own head. At all events Lady Caroline expired in the most excruciating agony.

The death of an individual in a family, let that family be high or low, rich or poor, noble or plebeian, cannot fail of casting a momentary gloom over every part of it. I am not going to enter into a dissertation upon death. My intention is merely to shew that the loss of my daughter, notwithstanding the very small portion of affection which subsisted between us, did excite in my breast a something beyond cold indifference. If I did not do honour to her memory by cherishing a tender recollection of the few virtues she possessed, to the exclusion of her vices and follies, I at least regretted that a being who was indebted to me for her existence had been untimely dispatched in

the prime of life to that "bourne whence no traveller returns." However little the intercourse between us had been, I still felt that she was my child, and now blamed myself for having omitted to assist in the formation of her mind and manners in early youth. Her heart was not naturally deficient in those qualities which render a person estimable in the eyes of others; but her education had been so grossly neglected, her mind was so completely uninformed, that her good qualities never had an opportunity of developing themselves. Drawn suddenly from the country, where she was suffered to run almost wild, to be introduced into society where nothing is natural and every thing constrained, it is only astonishing that she acquitted herself as she did. Marrying as she was fated to do, and in a manner deserted by both her parents—thrown upon the world,

with nothing to guide her but her own slender stock of discretion, it could be no wonder that her virtue wavered and that she at last fell a sacrifice to passions which, circumstanced as she was, she could hardly be expected to controul.

On the death of her daughter Lady Erpingham most religiously adhered to all the observances prescribed^d from time immemorial in great families. Her ladyship kept the house the stipulated number of days, and admitted in strict order of priority her several friends, according to the different degrees of intimacy and relationship. The features of the Countess's face were of that happy cast as to serve for expressing all the various passions under the sun which she was capable of feeling, with hardly any trouble to herself.

But the outward grief made ample amends for the lack of inward sorrow,

Lady Erpingham clothed herself, as well as her whole establishment, in *black*. I cannot call it mourning, for except in the sombre appearance which every thing was made to assume I could not perceive the slightest alteration.

The last assertion is perhaps of too unqualified a nature; there was a difference in the arrangements for her ladyship's morning's airing. She alternately drove her black and grey horses, but during the first three months of the mourning, the grey horses were sent to the straw yard, and the black horses had the undivided honour of dragging her ladyship from place to place.

The pride of Lady Erpingham induced her to bestow upon her daughter a most magnificent funeral. The expences she very liberally took upon herself and defrayed from her private purse. In collecting together an im-

meuse assemblage of carriages to accompany the earthly remains of Lady Caroline Flanagan to the stone's end, and in directing that the trappings of woe should be of the most splendid description, the Countess rested satisfied that she had performed all the duties that could be required even from a fond and exemplary mother, much less from a mother of rank, where fondness and example are as seldom found as looked for. Miss Tondeater had led the visitors of her ladyship to understand, that the slightest mention or allusion to Caroline would harrow up a world of sorrow, her memory therefore soon sunk into that oblivion from which no one about the Countess had the smallest inclination to disturb it.

As to myself I can honestly say, that I was a real mourner. I mourned for Lady Caroline's foibles, I mourned for

the cause of her death, and I mourned for her loss. But as the proverb says, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. By the settlement I made on my daughter the twenty thousand pounds, in case of her decease without children would revert to myself. The money was acceptable, but it was the means of stirring up strife between me and my son. The Captain had made a friend of Charles in the business, and the latter strenuously insisted that it was for my honour as well as for my credit that the wife's fortune should be yielded up to the husband. On my refusal Charles threatened me with refusing his assent to the arrangements in contemplation on his coming of age. This alarmed me, and I thought it advisable to compromise, but experience had taught me the utility of cautious dealings.

In the first place I ascertained the

amount of the Captain's debts, which I found to be less than five hundred pounds. I then guaranteed the creditors the payment of their several demands on their again taking him into custody. With the Captain once more in limbo I had little difficulty in negotiating. His ardent desire of liberty led him to agree to any terms I proposed.

In return for my interference on his behalf I required his assistance in maintaining Charles in good humour till he was of age. On his agreeing to this preliminary I undertook to pay the Captain's debts in full, and to pay him the sum of two thousand pounds the day the deeds were signed, by which I became absolute master of my allotted portion of the Bingwood estates.

But with all my foresight I neglected a most material stipulation. I had not provided that the Captain should desist

from leading Charles into that routine of debauchery and dissipation which I foresaw must soon terminate his existence, possibly before my ends were served. All attempts to separate him from Flanagan were ineffectual, and without a complete separation there could be no hopes of amendment.

I had no complaint to make of Flanagan, but for the course of life in which he kept my son constantly engaged. Like many of his countrymen, he was thoughtless and passionate; but he had neither trouble nor care, except for the present moment. Unlike the serpent who wormed himself into my confidence at the same period of life, he had no view beyond the enjoyment of the time being; and I verily believe, that so far from preying upon Charles, he would have cheerfully shared his purse with him. At the death of his wife, the Captain, like the other parts

of the family, dressed himself, for a short time, in black ; but as soon as decency permitted, he cast off his sable habiliments, and with them all his grief; and prepared to achieve fresh conquests in the field of love, in the hope of being more successful in his operations than he had been with Caroline. I have been told that his stars were subsequently propitious to him; and that an old dowager of sixty-three was smitten with his charms, and after a courtship of three hours, had made him master of a lovely person and large fortune. But as my intimacy with the Captain was of short continuance, I cannot vouch for the fact. If it be true, the old liquorish —— (I do not like to fill up the blank,) richly deserved the fate which I am confident awaited her.

The death of my daughter was succeeded by the alarming illness of my

son. He and his companion had been to a masked ball in character. The heavy dress, which Charles wore, was put on over his usual clothes. The heat of the room, and the exertion requisite to maintain his part, were more than his debilitated frame was enabled to support. He withdrew from the party in haste, and undressed himself in a room without a fire, exposing himself, while in a state of profuse perspiration, to a cold sharp air. An inflammation upon the lungs was the consequence of his extreme imprudence. The physicians considered him in the most imminent danger, and gave me reason to expect that every moment would be his last.

Knowing how much I had at stake, my attendance upon him was unceasing ; and, in the course of a few days, the disorder had arrived at its crisis, and had taken a favourable turn. I

had at last the satisfaction of having my cares repaid by the declaration of the medical attendants, that all positive apprehension had ceased for the present; and that with the greatest caution and strictest temperance, there was a strong probability of a perfect recovery.

My joy at the announcement of his convalescence was excessive; and I am satisfied, arose more from the preservation of my son, for his own sake, than for the event which first induced me to watch by his bed-side, and to hope for the prolongation of his existence. Health may lay the foundation of a friendship, (if indeed it is possible for such a thing to exist at all,) but it is the sick bed which strengthens and cements it. I admired the fortitude of Charles under his sufferings, and felt the glow of affection increase in warmth from the time he refused to take either

nourishment or medicine, unless administered by my own hand.

His recovery was gradual, but his amendment was certain. As soon as he was judged to have gained sufficient strength to bear the motion of a carriage, it was deemed expedient that he should be removed to a more genial climate. The Continent being closed against us, the south coast of Devonshire was fixed upon, as the most efficient substitute for the mild air of Lisbon or Montpelier; and into Devonshire I resolved to attend him.

A sick couch had no great charms for his bosom-friend the Captain. I had therefore little difficulty in prevailing upon this descendant of royalty to retract his offer of being the third in the party, particularly as my style of reasoning was strengthened by a few hundred pounds, which I presented to him, for the purpose of supporting

himself in a manner becoming his high birth and accomplishments. By this means Flanagan was placed beyond the power of giving me any annoyance in the plan I had formed for the re-establishment of Charles's health, and for the improvement of his moral character. I thought it would be a favourable time to work upon his mind; to direct his attention to pursuits adapted to his rank in life; and to withdraw him wholly from his former habits.

While Charles continued in positive danger, his mother, for form's sake, entered the chamber of sickness as the clock struck two. Her ladyship did her son the honour of asking the nurse after the health of the patient. Whatever the answer was, she left the room hoping that he would be better. This, however, did not satisfy her maternal feelings, for she as regularly made enquiries through the medium of Miss

my son, I may be mistaken. It is probable I may have been deceived by my own sensations. I had found Charles different from what I had expected—changed from what I had previously seen him. In the fulness of my heart, I may have given him credit for more merit than he really did, or was ever likely to possess. Be that as it may, I certainly felt as a father proud of his offspring. I had not many years to live in the world, and I was not a little proud that my representative would preserve the respectability of his family, at least as well as I had done.

In the midst of the pleasing prospects which inveterate habit of visionary castle-building was always picturing to my fancy, I recollected the motives which had induced me to refuse severing the family estates, and began to use the same train of reason-

ing with regard to my son. But, in our case, the step was absolutely necessary; although my debts did not come under the appellation of "debts of honour," they were such to me, and I could never have looked forward to comfort till I had honourably discharged them. I made Charles acquainted with the actual circumstances under which I was placed, and found him ready to meet my wishes in every respect, and willing to make every sacrifice for my present and future ease. I blushed for myself when I called to mind my own behaviour in a parallel case, and considered that half of the misery which I had known in the world, had been inflicted on me as a punishment for a neglect of the first of duties.

Satisfied with the society of each other, we continued rambling from place to place, until the near approach

of the period which was to release Charles from his state of pupillage. We then returned to London, when, after a warm encomium upon his merits, I desired Lady Erpingham to embrace a new son. But she was as indifferent of the new son as she had been of the old one, suffering all maternal solicitude to evaporate in simply hoping that he was better.

Our next steps were to arrange the necessary deeds, and to celebrate the termination of Charles's minority. Bingwood was the place fixed upon by both of us. Charles had taken an early dislike to Erpingham ; besides, it was no longer mine. The furniture, and the house itself, was the acknowledged property of the Duke of ———. The pride of my son seemed as much hurt by this circumstance as my own was, but it was not to be remedied ; for I do not think that to have saved the

world from destruction, Lady Erpingham would have been induced to run the risk of being disturbed in her arrangements.

Previous to leaving London, I again resorted to a public advertisement for the purpose of ascertaining the exact amount of my debts. As a lawyer was a necessary instrument to our proceedings, I devolved that task upon his shoulders. My son and I agreed, that a sufficiency should be sold from the Bingwood property to clear both him and myself from all incumbrances, and that the remainder should be equally divided between us. The part left would, I calculated, leave enough for us both, according to the diminished scale of our desires. Until Charles formed an establishment of his own, he would be provided with a country house, and Lady Erpingham

would of course permit her son to have the "run" of the town house. By this means, his income would be adequate to his rank, while he remained a bachelor; and I intended, whenever he settled for life, to give up Bingwood to him entirely, as well as a considerable part of the income I had reserved for himself. We had then only to look forward to the departure of Lady Erpingham to be again in affluence, but in the mean time we should be in comfort.

How easy is it for the imagination to revel in schemes of happiness which it has formed, and how rarely are those schemes realized. But there is a gratification in those visionary pleasures, which has at least the merit of being innocent. Even now, while my head is tracing the sensations which I had formerly experienced, I forgot

my disappointments, and ceased to think that hope had for ever deserted me.

In this state, which to me was approaching towards happiness, we arrived at Bingwood. The sight of my old tenants now re-established in their farms, and the air of gaiety which surrounded us, made me feel myself six-and-thirty years younger ; for the scene which was then presented upon a similar occasion, forced itself upon my recollection. Under what different auspices was I ushered into life, to those which now attended upon my son. In my case, the immediate possession of wealth almost unbounded ; in my son's case, having to secure a father's comforts, by the same means which I had refused to my own parent. Myself, on the day of festivity, enjoying the most exuberant health ; my son but newly risen from the couch of

sickness. The contrast of our situation created many painful reflections, and my heart felt as heavy as if it had been laden with the foreboding of the evils which the coming day was destined to bring forth.

CHAP. XV.***A FATAL CHALLENGE.***

THE long-wished-for day at last arrived, and was ushered in with every demonstration of joy. The preparation for the festival had occupied several of the preceding weeks, and bid fair to rival the honours formerly done to myself. The nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood, as well as a numerous assemblage of Charles's acquaintance were invited to partake of the entertainment, and to witness the sports which the tenants and the pea-

santry had arranged among themselves to celebrate the occasion. Wherever Charles made his appearance, the acclamations rent the air. With such of the farming classes as took pleasure in the combats of cocks and dogs, and in all field sports of a minor as well as major description, Charles had always been popular ; and, except in the instance of the young fellow whom he had caused to be committed for poaching, he had not been guilty of any glaring act of oppression.

Although Charles's recovery had been rapid, he was still much of an invalid. He had not only to struggle against the weakness which naturally follows severe indisposition, but it was evident that his constitution had suffered considerable injury from his early courses ; and the cordial greeting and the look of satisfaction with which he received his old companions, Sir

Timothy Sweepstakes, Lord Rasper, and his brother foxhunters, made me apprehensive that there was no small danger of his relapsing into his former habits. I dreaded the consequences of fresh excesses, and earnestly besought him to be careful of his health, and above every thing to avoid a too eager pursuit of the bottle.

As far as promises could go, I was satisfied. Charles urged the necessity he was under of receiving his old acquaintances as formerly, but assured me that he now too well knew how to estimate the blessings of health, to rashly throw away the poor remains which disease and dissipation had left him. But I still dreaded the performance, and as the day advanced I was convinced that my apprehensions were well founded. I plainly perceived by the company he selected immediately about himself, that his former propen-

sities, although they had been suspended in consequence of his illness were far from being eradicated from his breast.

He talked with delight to his old associates of their former exploits, and listened with the greatest glee to the recounting of scenes of a similar nature which had happened since his departure from them.

In mingling with the tenantry, I could see that his attention was arrested only by those who had heretofore joined with him in his low pursuits, leaving the most respectable among the farmers altogether unnoticed.

The party at dinner was numerous, but they were more to be considered as the friends of Charles than of myself. As I had mingled so little with the surrounding inhabitants few could have been present on my account, ex-

cept indeed, my old *friend* Doctor Bubbleby, for as the bone of contention between us no longer existed, we managed to interchange civilities as if nothing had happened. My eyes were frequently directed towards the part of the table where Charles was seated, particularly at those times when I found the bottle was circulating. I was gratified to find that he was conducting himself with a sufficient degree of caution, and I ventured to entertain a hope that he would not be thrown off his guard. He had managed to resist the united efforts of Sir Timothy Sweepstakes and Lord Rasper, with more firmness than I gave him credit for possessing, and I augured well from observing that he smiled when he was charged by them with having become a milksop.

About two hours after the desert had been placed upon the table, I left the

dining-room upon a trifling excuse. My motives for so doing originated from the supposition that my presence would be a check upon the general hilarity of the company. I found myself for many reasons incapable of deriving amusement from the scene before me. I could add nothing to the pleasures of the day, and I was determined not to diminish them. Besides, I was aware, that fox-hunters, perhaps, more than any other set of men give way to a freedom of discourse to which, I was not so lost to decency as to become a listener in the presence of my son. I could not prevent its taking place, but there was no necessity for me to countenance it.

I retired to my study. The time which was to put an end to my embarrassments, and again to set me free in the world had now arrived, but I felt far from satisfied. A secret dread

seemed to be hanging over me for which I could in no way account. I saw before me the means of enjoying comforts for the future, not indeed, upon the scale to which I had been accustomed, but fully adequate to my wants or to my desires, but still the prospect did not cheer me. Every thing that I could desire was within my reach, but I was far from feeling myself in a state of tranquillity. I was not miserable, but I cannot say that I was happy.

I was disturbed from this melancholy train of thought by a cry I heard in the passage that Lord Winterbourne was dying. I rushed to the dining-room and found him lying upon the floor deprived of sense and motion. His face was black, and bore evident marks of suffocation. A young surgeon who chanced to be at the table attempted to draw blood from him,

and exerted himself in the application of the usual remedies. But it was too late. The vital spark was extinct, and I had not only to mourn the loss of a son who promised to be an honour and a blessing to me, but that too at the critical moment when he was so essentially necessary, if not to my existence, at least to my well being in the world.

A look of consternation pervaded the whole company. In one or two of the countenances I could read not only an inward horror of the event, but also a secret consciousness of guilt. I fearfully cast my eyes around, in expectation of being told the causes which had led to the unfortunate catastrophe, for I could not bring myself to believe that it could have happened from natural means. But finding that a dead silence prevailed, I tremblingly ventured to enquire of the surgeon who had officiat-

ed, and who still hung about the body.

After some hesitation on the part of my informer, I learnt that my unhappy boy had fallen a victim to the disposition I have formerly mentioned of doing any thing that he was *dared* to do, without giving a moment's consideration to the consequences of the act. Sir Timothy Sweepstakes, and his noble colleague in debauchery, Lord Rasper, had made up their minds to christen Charles, as they called it, by leading him into a state of intoxication. The forbearance of Charles had only stimulated their exertions, and made them more eager to conquer his repugnance to the bottle. Soon after I left the room the wine was succeeded by the punch bowl, accompanied by the apparatus for preserving the liquor at the desired degree of heat.

Sir Timothy Sweepstakes had al-

ways prided himself on being an admirable manufacturer of punch, and on this occasion insisted upon officiating in honour, as he termed it, of his young friend. In the beverage which the baronet composed, the smallest part of the ingredients was water, but the company, however, had so far lost sight of reason to partake of it. Charles alone was proof against solicitation, having been most seriously cautioned against the use of spirituous liquors. He stoutly maintained his resolution until Sir Timothy having first emptied an additional bottle of brandy into the larger bowl, took a smaller one which was capable of containing about a quart, and filling it with the hot punch, thus strengthened, offered a wager of five hundred pounds that no one would drink it at two draughts, allowing an interval of three minutes between the operations of swallowing.

The scheme of Sir Timothy was completely successful. The rash boy caught at the wager, seized the bowl, and before he could be prevented had nearly emptied its contents. The bowl fell from his hands upon the floor, he sunk back in his chair—struggled for an instant—but before the efforts of nature could be assisted, breathed his last——a victim to the brutality and intemperance of a beast in the human form. The alarm was instantly given. The unfortunate youth was placed on the floor. The windows were thrown open for the admission of air, and in that state I discovered him, a melancholy spectacle of obstinate presumption.

My own sufferings were of too acute a nature to allow me to pay much attention to what was passing in the dining-room, but the awful looks of those that had witnessed the calamity

and the conscience stricken visages of the great actors in this melancholy scene are still before my eyes. The house of rejoicing became instantaneously the house of mourning, and the gloom which overspread the cheerful faces of those who were innocently partaking of the festal enjoyment, would have satisfied the most enthusiastic anchoret. The cup hung upon the lip, the dance ceased, the gambols were closed, and the happy beings who had been partakers in the general joy, gradually retreated. In a short time the place was a dreary waste—I must drop the pen—

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An end was now put to all my hopes. Nothing but dreariness was before me. No means were left to me for the payment of my creditors. To act with common honesty towards them, which I was resolved to do, to the utmost

extent of my power, I must have delivered up to them, every thing that was at present in my possession. My incumbrances were so enormous, that in the natural course of things, I could not expect to out-live the discharge of my debts, even if I transferred over the whole amount of my income for that purpose.

I regretted the loss of my son for his own sake. Possibly more on that account than for the situation in which his death had placed me. I say possibly, because I have been unable to analyze my feelings with that exactness which would allow me to determine whether they were most swayed by parental fondness, or by a sense of honour, for in that light I always viewed even a tradesman's debt. At all events I was miserable.

I wrote to Lady Erpingham an account of the melancholy event which

had bereft us of our surviving child. My letter was dictated by my feelings, but I had not that command over myself to weigh the words as they escaped from my pen. I thought that on such an occasion her heart would vibrate with my own.

But whether my epistle was wanting in the proper forms, or whether it contained expressions, which did not exactly accord with her ladyship's views of mortality, I cannot say. I was fool enough to expect that such a subject would have been thought worthy of personal exertion, and that her reply would have been given in her own hand. The loss of an only child, however, made no difference in the established regulations ;—the answer was as usual from Miss Toadeater. Her ladyship lamented the circumstance, but felt thoroughly satisfied that she had fulfilled the duties of a

mother. She had caused directions to be given for the immediate preparation of a patent coffin, and had given instructions to an undertaker, eminent for his taste and classical knowledge, to conduct the funeral. The ceremonials her ladyship had ordered to be such as the noble blood of the Vavasours were entitled to, and she hoped at my earliest convenience to receive authentic accounts of the whole having been *performed* with the utmost magnificence. Miss Toadeather was kindly desired further to inform me, that her ladyship being aware of my uncomfortable situation with regard to pecuniary matters, had engaged to be responsible to the undertaker for all his charges. Her ladyship attached one condition to her condescension—my son was to be buried at Erpingham.

In compliance with the request of the countess, the remains of my son

were conveyed to the family vault at Erpingham. The style of the funeral perfectly accorded with her ladyship's wishes. To add to its dignity, and to shew her regard to the deceased, the mother sent the carriage which she most frequently used, to accompany the procession.

**CHAP. XVI.****CONCLUSION.**

IT now became incumbent upon me to meet my creditors, and to lay before them a statement of my affairs. I dreaded the idea of being a pensioner upon the bounty of Lady Erpingham ; indeed, my spirit sunk, and dejected as it was, could never have submitted to such degradation. I should otherwise have given up the whole of the income I then possessed. But even while I am talking of accepting Lady Erpingham's bounty, I have no reason

to suppose that it would have been offered. Her ladyship might, indeed, have kindly acceded to me an apartment in her houses, and a seat at her table; and her pride, which would have been my only ground of dependance, might have induced her to discharge a tailor's bill that her husband might not be a disgrace to her.

As it was, I expressed a readiness to yield up all my interest in the Bingwood property, upon receiving an annuity of only five hundred per annum, and a general release. It was accepted by the majority, and trustees were appointed to carry the arrangements into effect. But an obstacle was created by some creditors more unreasonable than the rest, who pointed out that I was entitled to the Erpingham estates on the death of my wife. According to Lady Erpingham's habits of life, she seemed to bid fair to

reach the age of Methusaleh; to obviate that difficulty, therefore, I threw my reversionary interest into the bargain, stipulating, however, that in case of any accident befalling her ladyship at an earlier period than might be expected, that every thing should be my own again, when the principal and interest of the several debts should be entirely discharged. I had little hope of such a happy event, but it was still within the verge of possibility. I considered, however, that the chances were so greatly against the probability that I can safely say, the attentions I paid to Lady Erpingham, were purely disinterested. I received nothing from her while she was living, and I had now no motive to wish for her death, for even were such an event to take place immediately I could scarcely look forward to the enjoyment of the property.

From a splendid fortune and the brightest prospects, I now saw myself reduced to an income of five hundred a year. I was childless, and deprived of fortune. I had not the disposal of a single shilling after my decease, and could therefore hold out no hopes to any one, whom interest would induce to bear with my humours, and to smooth the pillow of declining age. My breast revolted at the thought of even partaking of my own property, when it was the boon of my wife. On my circumscribed income I determined to subsist, and laboured hard to reduce my wants to my present means.

My retirement from a world in which I had experienced little else than misery excited no degree of surprise, for not one human being took an interest in my welfare. My creditors had insured my life, and as the insurances were paid from my estates,

they cared but little whether I lived or died. I left behind me no one whose affections were due to me, or on whose friendship I had the slightest claim. When I expressed my determination to seclude myself from the vices and follies of mankind, the pride of Lady Erpingham did, indeed, induce her to offer her husband an asylum, which I have no doubt she would have afforded. Nay, perhaps, had her husband been in actual want, her pride would have tempted her to administer relief. But had I been mean enough to have availed myself of her bounty, I should have been only an humble addition to her empty state, and have been placed in a situation similar to that of Bajazet in his cage of iron. I should have been exposed to the finger of ridicule, and continually reminded of what I had been. As it was, I was independent, much more so in reality with my

slender pittance, than when I rolled in useless thousands. There was now no temptation to deceive me, nor motive to mislead me. I was enabled to view the world in its natural colours, and to rest satisfied that self-interest is the only diety, where the worship is free from hypocrisy, and that no man fails to prey upon his neighbour, except in cases where his advantage is greater from an opposite line of conduct.

I have now lived some years in a state of dull quiescence, bordering upon tranquillity, but without its sweets. At a distance from the busy "hum of men," I hear of little that makes me regret the change, but on the contrary, I hear of nothing which reconciles me to it. My feelings have rusted for want of use, and I am alike dead to sensations of pleasure or of pain. I have known sufficient of the

miseries of being in debt to induce me to live within my allotted pittance which is regularly transmitted to me. I have wandered from place to place, not in search of happiness, for that was beyond my contemplation, but in search of the means of consuming the vacant hours. I have dropped, and almost forgotten my titles, and have, indeed, almost lost the remembrance of myself.

There is nothing in my past life on which I can dwell with satisfaction. Conscious as I felt of my own neglected education, I criminally permitted my own children to pursue the same path. For their errors and follies I was answerable, for I should have taught them otherwise. It is not, I will admit, in the power of one person to *form* the heart of another, but much may in all cases be done towards moulding it for the proper performance

of the duties of life. Neither Charles nor his sister were deficient in essential qualifications, but their minds were warped by improper indulgence, and culpable indifference on the part of their natural protectors.

I have, perhaps, gone a little farther than I am actually warranted, in saying that I had nothing to cheer me, for my heart holds out to me the consolation that in my progress through life I have been more unfortunate than culpable. I was truly unfortunate in not possessing, at the time the disposition becomes fixed and settled, the advantages to be derived from the superintendence of any one on whom I could look with reverence and respect, and on whose opinions I had been early taught to place reliance.

I had, it is true, the sense to be fully aware of my father's follies, and yet, had the weakness to fall into the

same pit. I blamed him for aiming to dupe his son, in order to support his extravagance, and was compelled by necessity to resort to the same course of proceeding with my own child.

My heart once was capable of feeling an ardent attachment, and heaven only knows how fervently I loved. Still I could in great measure acquit myself of blame, in my transactions with Lydia Berrington. I was, perhaps, hasty, too hasty, in plunging into an abyss of passion, and I was equally blameable in a too rapid assumption of prudence. But to have satisfied my mind, when doubts had been created, was due to myself, particularly as I had so lately been the victim of early impressions ; and although I was satisfied that most of the miscarriages in life are the result of imprudence, and miscalculation, yet in my own case I have sometimes been tempted to think

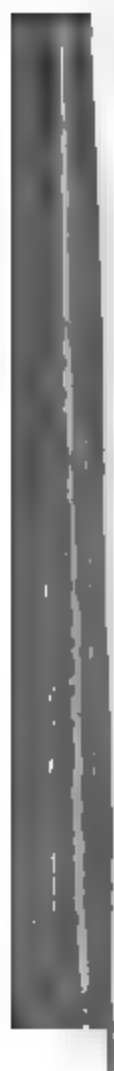
that fate had set a spell upon me. At least, I am anxious to believe that she did so, in separating me from the being whom my heart had chosen.

Whatever miseries I experienced in my marriage with Lady Erpingham, I richly deserved them. It was interest, and interest alone, which led to the connection, and it was interest that virtually dissolved it. They who form an union from similar motives, have no right to complain of the unhappiness which must necessarily follow.

I spare myself the recapitulation of any other parts of my history. It may, perhaps, be instructive to others, but it can be of no service to myself. I have endeavoured to prepare my mind for an event, which must ere long happen, and I can assure the reader that the present work has in no small degree tended to the composure I have

long been endeavouring to obtain. I have exerted myself to give a faithful picture of my feelings, and a true account of my actions. If I have disguised, or concealed any material it has been through inadvertency. The world, as I have already said, I have long done with, and of the reader I now finally take my leave.

FINIS.



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